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Official Records

16th plenary meeting
Monday, 1 October 2018, 9 a.m.
New York

*President*: Ms. Espinosa Garcés (Ecuador)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Mohamed (Sudan), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.*

**Agenda item 8** (*continued*)

**General debate**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Makei, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

**Mr. Makei** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): We live in paradoxical times, as optimism and pessimism equally characterize our lives. We recently adopted landmark documents, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. At the end of the year, the international community will give the green light to two more instruments that inspire particular hope for changing the situation in the world for the better, namely, the global compacts on refugees and migrants. The implementation of those unique initiatives is intended to transform human life on the globe in a drastic way so as to ensure that globalization is equitable and a win-win situation, to eradicate poverty and to preserve the planet for future generations.

The search for answers to global challenges and the quest for ways to reach common objectives clearly show that no country can do it alone. There can be no individual progress without collective progress. That is why, no matter how justified the criticism of the United Nations may be, we still need the Organization as a unique platform for cooperation and as an effective multilateral instrument based on principles that ensure equal and respectful treatment of each and every country and its priorities and needs. In order to assist States in implementing the ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda, we need effective United Nations country teams on the ground that can effectively help countries achieve results in moving towards sustainable development. That is where we see the essence of the reform of the United Nations development system.

Pursuing a globalization that will meet everyone's interests and managing that globalization for the common good are key objectives in the modern world. Yet we can see that there are evident difficulties in that area. Globalization is being accompanied by new geopolitical and geoeconomic lines and splits, not only in regional contexts, but also on a global scale. A kind of civilizational trap is emerging in which the demand for integration goes hand in hand with fragmentation, protectionism and even confrontation. Located in the heart of Europe, Belarus, on the one hand, is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union; on the other hand, it has an interest in pursuing deep economic cooperation with the European Union. Squeezed between two geopolitical power centres, we fully feel the interplay of geopolitics and geoeconomics.

The conflict in Ukraine and the rising tensions in the region, the sanctions and counter-sanctions, all weigh heavily on our country, if not directly, then indirectly, leading to substantial economic losses. As a medium-sized country with one of the most open economies in the world, because we export up to 60 to 70 per cent

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of our gross domestic product, Belarus is heavily dependent on external markets and international trade. That is one of the reasons why we consistently support building a fair, predictable and non-discriminatory trade and economic architecture, both in Europe and in other regions — one that is aligned with the interests of all countries. We believe that that architecture should be underpinned by the implementation of multi-tiered integration projects.

Owing to its geographical location, Belarus is particularly interested in closer cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union. Indeed, our western border remains the only economic border on the huge space stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok, and, in future, perhaps even Shanghai. That is why Belarus has consistently advocated for what is known as the "integration of integrations" as a principle of cooperation that seeks to find optimal ways to bring together economic growth and sustainable development.

Achieving the goals of the global 2030 Agenda, with its overarching promise to leave no one behind, requires a particular focus on and international support for middle-income countries. Indeed, it is that group of countries that is home to 5 billion of the world's total 7 billion people, and it wields the greatest potential for economic growth and sustainable development. On the other hand, it is within that group of countries that three quarters of the world's poor reside. They are the most vulnerable to such factors as global economic fluctuations, the consequences of regional conflicts, natural and human-caused catastrophes, climate upheavals and epidemics — all of which threaten social and economic stability and exacerbate inequality at both the regional and the global levels.

In that context, it is unjust that development progress continues to be gauged exclusively on the basis of per capita income. That criterion does not reflect the economic, social or environmental features inherent in middle-income countries. For Belarus, it is evident that the multidimensional nature of the challenges faced by the countries in that category, including our country, requires the application of multidimensional development criteria that would also be instrumental in designing the United Nations system's result-oriented strategies of cooperation with United Nations agencies. Belarus hopes that the high-level meeting to comprehensively discuss those issues, which the President of the General Assembly plans to convene in the near future, will provide a serious impetus for the United Nations to design and implement specific measures in that area.

Another multidimensional issue is increasingly coming to the forefront. Humankind has entered a new era, as digital technologies are drastically transforming our lives. The importance of the digital economy for sustainable and comprehensive economic growth is something that our country understands very well. In March, the presidential decree entitled "On the development of the digital economy", whose ambition it is to turn Belarus into an information-technology country, entered into force. The Belarus High-Tech Park is developing rapidly and has shown record rates of growth, both in terms of the number of residents and in terms of its exports.

Digital technologies have been rightly compared to rocket fuel for national economies. They enable the rapid introduction of innovations into various areas of human activities, such as education, the consumer market and social cooperation. They stimulate business activity, generate revenue and create jobs. At the same time, digitization will lead to drastic changes in the labour market, doing away, in the process, with a whole array of professions that will no longer be required in those new conditions, which will make many people employed in those sectors and industries extremely vulnerable.

Clearly, Governments in developed and many developing countries will soon confront a number of challenges, including how to adapt their own economies to the global digital transformation, how to effectively manage those processes at the national level and how to cope with unintended consequences generated by digitization. In that regard, Belarus proposes that the United Nations engage in international cooperation on digitization and forward-looking technological planning with a view to facilitating sustainable development. The purpose of such cooperation would be to assist developing countries in finding their own niche within the global digital economy and to increase the benefits of digitization, as well as to ensure their equitable and fair distribution.

We therefore welcome the establishment by the Secretary-General of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation, and we hope that the Panel will pay particular attention to the capacity-building of States in that area. It is absolutely clear that the strengthening

of such capacities would be fruitless unless the effort is predicated on the values of sustainability and prosperity for all. It is precisely those values that form the fundamental basis for the tasks required, which can be accomplished only if all countries work together.

Unfortunately, those values are often fall victim to confrontational thinking, which we are seeing more frequently. At the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda in 2015 (see A/70/PV.4 *et seq.*), the President of Belarus contended that sustainable development would be unattainable in the absence of lasting peace and security. That point is completely relevant today. True sustainability cannot be achieved outside a framework of security, the strength of which is being tested day in and day out.

One shared threat that we face is terrorism. Combating it requires a comprehensive approach whereby all countries uphold the principles of international law and refrain from the use of double standards. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations leadership and stand willing to support them so as to mount a common front against terrorism. Our country's contribution to the global processes of unification in that area will be to convene a high-level international conference on preventing terrorism in the digital age, which we will organize jointly with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and which will be held in the Belarus capital, Minsk, in a week's time, on 9 and 10 October.

Turning to the overall issue of international security, it is evident that the world today is facing unprecedented challenges and threats. Confrontation in international relations increasingly evokes the notion of a new cold war. More and more frequently we hear threats of the likelihood of the use of weapons of mass destruction, even if only as a result of an inadvertent conflict or an accident. That points to a crisis in diplomacy and seriously undermines the authority of the United Nations as the key international organization tasked with preventing international conflicts.

The degree of divergence in relations and views among a number of great Powers has reached a boiling point. When it comes to some issues, the situation has become absurd. The principal organs of the United Nations — first and foremost the Security Council — are turning into arenas for confrontation, political grandstanding and self-assertion, with confrontation prevailing over dialogue and geopolitical ambitions taking the upper hand over common sense.

Like many in this Hall, I do not, regrettably, have recipes for how to fix the situation. But we are deeply convinced that there is no choice other than to forge a global order on the basis of shared values. It is patently clear, however, that it is impossible to arrive at shared values by means of coerced democratization and violence, which subvert legitimate authority. The bitter geopolitical experience of the past three decades tells us that we should all take a common interest in such values. We believe that the idea of stability could serve as a unifying paradigm. Bringing about stability means stopping the unwinding spiral of geopolitical chaos in its tracks. What needs to be done to achieve that?

First, stability implies that States retain their role as the primary international actors and that State sovereignty is respected. Contemporary international law is predicated on those key principles, which are enshrined in basic United Nations documents. On the one hand, those texts reflect the right of States to choose their own form of political governance, as well as their own path and priorities of development, while, on the other hand, they refer to the non-interference of countries in the internal affairs of other countries. Unfortunately, adherence to those principles is not universal in today's world. The politics of sanctions, economic coercion and political isolation against so-called rogue regimes are frequently found in many countries' foreign policy toolkits. We have all borne witness to the decades-long policies of economic, trade and financial blockade against the freedom-loving State of Cuba, which not only run counter to United Nations resolutions, but take a heavy toll on that country's social and economic development.

Secondly, stability is also about strengthening the State, along with its role in domestic affairs. We are absolutely convinced that only strong States can provide security for their populations and ensure their well-being. We believe that people living in places where real, firm authority is absent could testify to that truth better than anyone else. Therefore, if we really have a stake in ensuring global stability, we should seek not to undermine the State, but rather to strengthen it.

Thirdly and finally, stability very much relates to relations among the great Powers, which today must, once again, learn to listen to one another and hear each other's arguments, in addition to being willing to

embrace reasonable compromises. In the past, it was the great Powers that determined the destiny of the planet. Today, they no longer enjoy such an exclusive prerogative. Still, unity among the great Powers on shared values and their leadership in advancing them are a sine qua non for progress in many areas.

In that spirit, the President of Belarus, Alyaksandr Lukashenko, advanced an initiative to begin a comprehensive dialogue on international security last year. Its objective is to overcome the existing disagreements that plague inter-State relations in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space. We are convinced that only dialogue can help resolve the deep crisis of trust in international relations and lead to mechanisms conducive to peace, international security and sustainable development.

Can one day or one meeting change history? The great leader of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, called that moment a tryst with destiny. I think that our common task is to increase the number of such moments. We must pool our efforts to find common solutions that are acceptable to everyone.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Eldirdiri Mohamed Ahmed, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Sudan.

**Mr. Ahmed** (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to sincerely congratulate Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. On behalf of the Government and the people of the Sudan, I wish to express to the President and Vice-Presidents our sincere wishes for every success in their tasks and for a successful session. I would also like to express our appreciation and gratitude for the expertise and effectiveness of the President's predecessor, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, in presiding over the seventy-second session.

This session is being held under the theme "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". That reflects the interest of this international Organization in achieving peace and sustainable development while working to ensure fundamental human rights, which are all basic pillars of the United Nations and exemplify the hopes and ambitions that we all aspire to achieve. The Sudan, along with the international community, looks forward to seeing the United Nations play its leadership role in the promotion of balanced development in peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies. In order for our Organization to play that role and serve humankind, as well as confront increasing challenges in all fields, the Organization should be reformed and become more effective and capable of confronting such challenges.

The national dialogue initiative led in 2014 by His Excellency Mr. Omer Hassan Ahmed Al-Bashir, President of the Republic of the Sudan, resulted in the formation of the Government of National Reconciliation with the participation of political parties all across the political spectrum, including the armed movements in Darfur, which opted for the peaceful settlement in line with the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur.

That was positively reflected in the promotion of peace and security throughout the country. It culminated with the successes of the first and second phases of the exit strategy with regard to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) pursuant to Security Council resolutions 2363 (2017) and 2429 (2018). That is yet another success story involving the transition from peacekeeping to recovery, reconstruction and social reconciliation. In that regard, the Government of the Sudan would like to underscore its readiness to continue cooperating fully in order to facilitate the implementation of the third phase.

We would also like to commend the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union (AU) in Darfur. We hope that the United Nations, donors, and sisterly and friendly countries will participate meaningfully in the pledging conference due to be held shortly in order to promote stability and finance various recovery, reconstruction and development projects, as well as peacebuilding and sustainable peace programmes in Darfur during the transitional period in preparation for the exit of UNAMID in 2020.

It is vital to highlight the successes and tangible results achieved as a result of the national weapons-collection campaign. That was the result of the social sector's cooperation with the Government in collaboration with partners, notably UNAMID. It led to a reduction in crime rates, as well as to reduced drug and human trafficking. It also led to the greater movement of citizens and their repatriation aimed at undertaking various economic activities.

The Government of the Sudan believes that negotiations are the only path leading to peace. It must,

therefore, extend a helping hand to the armed groups in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, and participate in all rounds of negotiations in various forums. In order for the Government to create an environment conducive to such negotiations, it has committed itself to the unilateral ceasefire in all theatres of operation for more than two years. It is worth mentioning that the Government of the Sudan launched a number of initiatives to establish humanitarian corridors and to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the South Kordofan and Blue Nile regions, but certain rebel movements in Blue Nile areas still refuse to participate in such initiatives. The Government of the Sudan has agreed that the United Nations would shoulder the task of delivering humanitarian assistance from within the country.

The Sudanese Government is making tireless efforts to ensure economic reforms, regulate fiscal policies and set transitional strategic policies aimed at reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development goals, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Despite those wise policies adopted by the Government in order to mobilize local resources, promote the role of the private sector and govern fiscal management, the unilateral sanctions imposed on my country and the impact of accumulated foreign debt continue to undermine our development and our ability to engage in the necessary development activities. They have also reduced our ability to attract essential foreign financing, as we have not been permitted to have any form of debt exemption under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative, despite the fact that the Sudan has met all of the technical preconditions. We would also like to recall that the Sudan has the potential to help achieve food security in Africa and the Arab region, so it should be supported in that vital field.

The Sudan appreciates the United States Administration's decision to lift the trade embargo imposed on my country in October 2017. We look forward to having the Sudan removed from the United States list of countries accused of sponsoring terrorism. We also look forward to positive partnerships in future, especially now that we are quite active at both the regional and the international levels in the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We refer in particular to the report issued by the United States State Department in September, which supported our approach.

The Sudan has been an honest defender of the principles of justice and international cooperation, as well as the principle of fighting impunity. However, the selective approach adopted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) has caused that court to lose the impartiality of judicial bodies and has led to the disappointment of the international community, especially among African countries. The position of the Sudan towards the ICC is therefore aligned with many decisions adopted by the AU, underscoring our view that the ICC is nothing but a political tool that dons the mantle of law in order to achieve political objectives that seek to break the will of peoples, particularly African peoples. The Sudan therefore calls for African voices to be heeded. It warns against the politicization and abuse of the United Nations in the name of international justice based on the Relationship Agreement signed between the United Nations and the ICC, which has a negative influence on the United Nations, pushing it into the realm of international political conflicts.

My Government has made concerted efforts to host a large number of refugees, which currently stands at more than 3 million. We provide them with the necessary assistance, which covers more than 70 per cent of their needs, while the international community meets less than 30 per cent of those needs. That places huge pressure on the communities providing assistance to refugees, especially in the light of the harsh economic circumstances that my country faces. Given the fact that those circumstances will not improve in the near future, the influx of refugees into my country will continue to be a burden. I urge the international community to accelerate the provision of the necessary assistance to my country so that it can fulfil its obligations with respect to that humanitarian situation.

The Government of my country has made significant progress in the field of promoting human rights in the Sudan. That was recognized by the Human Rights Council in its decision issued in Geneva last week, which underlined our positive cooperation with the Council's mechanisms.

My Government has made great efforts to combat human trafficking and illegal migration, as well as transnational crime, in order to strengthen peace and stability. Thanks to the geographic location of the Sudan in the heart of Africa, that can be achieved at the national, regional and international levels. Those efforts culminated in the joint initiative by the Horn of Africa and the European Union countries to address the

root causes and consequences of illegitimate migration in the Horn of Africa region, known as the Khartoum Process. We have high hopes that the international community will reach consensus and recognize the leadership of and role played by the Sudan in the efforts to combat migration-related problems.

The Sudan reaffirms its position, which is to reject terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including State terrorism, as a means of achieving political objectives. The Sudan has made clear that position by committing to and ratifying all relevant regional and international conventions. We have long been an effective member of the international community, at the international, regional and bilateral levels. We have explicitly contributed to combating that phenomenon and have prevented many terrorist operations, thanks to the exchange of information and good institutional relations that link the Sudan with its partners, be they regional, international or bilateral.

In that context, my delegation expresses great concern over the growing phenomenon of Islamophobia, which takes various forms. We strongly condemn the acts carried out on that basis, which have led to discrimination, hatred and an environment that is conducive to violence. We stress that terrorism should not be linked to any religion, culture or civilization. The Sudan underscores its cooperation in the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in a comprehensive, sustained and consistent manner. We also underline the need to adopt an inclusive approach to the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, taking into consideration the various cultural, social, economic and political aspects of that phenomenon. The means to accomplish those ends include the eradication of poverty and support for development in developing nations, especially in Africa, and the promotion of dialogue between the North and the South.

The Sudan pays great attention to local, regional and international environmental issues. We reaffirm our commitment to all of the conventions relating to the environment, given the negative environmental impact on wide swathes of the Sudan as a result of drought, desertification, the lack of rainfall and flooding. That was quite clear in the conflict in Darfur, which started with disputes between herders and farmers caused by the drought that affected the region. It was a clear demonstration of the direct link between drought, desertification, environmental degradation and conflicts, especially in Africa. We call upon the international community to support the national and regional initiatives in that field, such as the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative.

With regard to the issue of water, my country supports a balanced and comprehensive approach to the management of water resources with other countries in the Nile Basin by promoting coordination and cooperation between those countries. The aim is to achieve the desired goals through various mechanisms, including the Nile Basin Initiative. In that context, the Sudan will continue its endeavours with Egypt, Ethiopia and the remaining Nile Basin countries, so that we can settle all contentious issues related to the Nile waters.

Once again, my country's delegation stresses our full commitment to all of the international treaties and conventions relevant to the maintenance of international peace and security and demilitarization, foremost among them the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to which the Sudan acceded in 1973, as well as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, or Pelindaba Treaty. The Sudan also plays a recognizedrole in promoting cooperation among African countries in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We stress that strengthening the values of peace, security and stability in the world cannot be achieved in the presence of weapons of mass destruction. We are fully committed to supporting all international efforts aimed at eliminating such weapons. The Sudan pays particular attention to small arms and light weapons, since they have a direct relationship to transnational organized crime, terrorism and drug trafficking. To that end, we have been making multifaceted efforts within the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), as well as the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, in addition to our bilateral efforts with neighbouring countries aimed at ensuring the demarcation of our borders with full control over them and at setting up customs checkpoints.

My country's delegation would like to express our sincere congratulations to the Government and the brotherly people of the Republic of South Sudan on the progress achieved in reviving the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, which was reached in Addis Ababa

on 12 September. That Agreement was signed by all parties to the conflict, as well as by stakeholders from civil-society organizations, young people, religious leaders and other important members of South Sudan society. That was the result of negotiations undertaken in Khartoum from 25 June to 28 September, thanks to an initiative launched by His Excellency the President of the Sudan and a mandate from IGAD.

In that vein, the Khartoum Declaration on good intentions and the ceasefire in South Sudan was signed on 26 July, which was followed by the engagement of all parties to the conflict in the negotiation process. After that, the details were initialled, the last initialling of which took place on 30 August, thanks to the sincere efforts made by the Sudanese mediation team to promote the resolution of African conflicts within the African framework. We also highly appreciate the great efforts made by IGAD and the leaders of its member countries, for they have contributed effectively to the achievements realized. We would like to highlight the efforts made by the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and Head of IGAD, His Excellency Mr. Abiy Ahmed; the President of Uganda, His Excellency Mr. Yoweri Museveni; and the President of Kenya, His Excellency Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta. Their concerted efforts were in line with those of our President, His Excellency Mr. Omar al-Bashir, all of which led to the possibility of bringing peace to South Sudan.

We would also like to thank the Troika countries — he United States, the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Norway — for their support for IGAD. They are and we thank them for their moral and material support during the negotiation process. We also thank the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union for their support during that phase.

If there is one country on Earth capable of speaking of the sacrifices that it has made for South Sudan, it would be my country, the Sudan. Had the Republic of Sudan not agreed to voluntarily let go of a quarter of its territory, a third of its people and three quarters of its petroleum resources, the State of South Sudan would not have been established. The Republic of the Sudan granted the people of South Sudan the right to self-determination in a move unprecedented move on the entire African continent. The only reason was the desire to bring peace and stability to the Sudan and South Sudan. After such massive sacrifices for peace, the Sudan cannot afford to lose peace once again in either part of the Sudan, that is to say, the Republic of the Sudan or the Republic of South Sudan.

I would say to those who doubt the capacities of the various leaders in the Republic of South Sudan to work together or the intentions of the region's States to stay united in their support for South Sudan that we all have no choice but to give peace a chance. We have no hope for a bright future for South Sudan in particular and the region in general without supporting the implementation of the peace agreement that has been reached.

As for the donor countries in particular, I would say that the contributions they made in the past will not be in vain, except if the current opportunity to achieve sustainable peace in South Sudan is lost. I therefore call on those countries to continue without hesitation their support for South Sudan, because it is in dire need of such assistance and contributions.

During their previous summit, held in Addis Ababa, the countries of the region called on the Security Council to consider expanding the regional protection force in South Sudan from 4,000 to 8,000 soldiers and to ensure that the Sudan, Uganda, Djibouti and Somalia contribute to that force. We look forward to a quick response to that appeal so that we can fulfil our huge responsibilities as guarantors of peace in South Sudan.

The separation of South Sudan from the Sudan was not an easy or smooth process, and many issues remain unresolved between the two neighbouring countries. However, the new environment that has resulted from the mediation initiative among the parties in the Republic of South Sudan launched by the President of the Republic of the Sudan, Omar Al-Bashir, has led to a genuine change in the relations between the two brotherly countries. Within just 41 days of that initiative, success was achieved on several issues that had remained unresolved for years. That was possible owing to the considerable trust on the part of President Salva Kiir and Riek Machar of South Sudan in President Omar Al-Bashir of the Sudan and the Sudanese mediator.

The current circumstances are therefore conducive to the resolution of all pending issues between the two countries, at the top of which is the Abyei issue. The two parties have begun informal consultations aimed at promoting trust and closing the chapter of controversy forever. The Sudan welcomes the address to the Assembly by the First Vice-President of the Republic of

South Sudan, Mr. Taban Deng Gai, in which he stressed his willingness to contribute positively to the resolution of the problems of South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

One of the greatest principles established by this international Organization is that all States, big and small, have the right to be able to live in peace in their regional environment. That right applies to the Republic of the Sudan and to the Republic of South Sudan, as well as to all other States in our region. We call upon the international community to work with all of us in order to apply that great United Nations principle and make it a tangible reality.

The Sudan reaffirms its support for the joint initiative of the African Union and the United Nations aimed at bringing peace and stability to the Central African Republic. In that regard, we commend the tireless efforts made by the President of the Central African Republic, Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera. We wish him every success.

The Sudan has hosted many parties and armed movements from Central Africa in order to mediate between them and help reach an agreement to put an end to the division and fighting in the Central African Republic. We will continue along that path under the umbrella of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and in line with the announcement of Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, during the high-level meeting on the Central African Republic, which was held during the current session of the General Assembly.

The Sudan underscores its principled position on the Palestinian question. We condemn any form of aggression against the religious sites in Palestine, notably Al-Quds Al-Sharif. We stress our support for the Arab Peace Initiative, which seeks to establish a Palestinian State within its 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Arab territories.

My delegation also condemns the gross violations of human rights committed against the minority Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, as manifested in the killing of people, the demolition of homes and mosques, and the forced displacement of thousands of people from their villages. We call on the international community to take practical steps to end such violations and bring the perpetrators to account.

The Sudan reiterates its position in support of the constitutional legitimacy of brotherly Yemen. We call on all political stakeholders to engage in the political process, renounce their infighting and refrain from violence, so that they can reach a political solution in order to stop the bloodshed decimating the Yemeni people, in line with the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference and the Security Council resolutions.

The Sudan also reiterates its keen interest in ensuring the territorial integrity of Syria. We support all efforts to overcome the current crisis in Syria, which is becoming more complex each day.

Once again, the Sudan underlines the importance of bringing about stability in brotherly Somalia. We call on the international community to provide all necessary support to the Government and the people of Somalia so that they can overcome the challenges facing their country.

The delegation of my country welcomes the breakthrough achieved in the relations between the two sisterly neighbours Ethiopia and Eritrea. We look forward to the strengthening of their bilateral relations, which bodes well for their Governments and peoples, as well as for the countries of the wider region.

With regard to the situation in Libya, the Sudan's position has been always to support the brotherly Libyan people and to strive with the international community to ensure the success of the various initiatives that seek to bring security and stability to Libya, particularly through the Skhirat Political Agreement, which represents the main political pillar in that country. We also reject any interference in the internal affairs of Libya, given that such action would have catastrophic repercussions on the stability and security of the country and the wider region. In that context, the Sudan expresses its readiness to host the upcoming meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the countries neighbouring Libya.

We once again express our solidarity with and support for the reform agenda that the Secretary-General is striving to implement and especially the efforts made to strengthen the General Assembly and its various subsidiary organs. The General Assembly is considered the largest and most representative body of States Members of the United Nations and plays an important role in issues relating to international peace and security. Those reforms will ensure that the

General Assembly is able to meet the requirements of the twenty-first century and address the continuing challenges facing us.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates its commitment to international multilateralism under the leadership of the United Nations. We stress the noble purposes that have been the building blocks of the United Nations, particularly those pertaining to the maintenance of international peace and security, achieving sustainable development and promoting human rights through an approach that is underpinned by international cooperation and dialogue, with a view to enhancing friendly international relations and settling conflicts through peaceful means.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Denis Ronaldo Moncada Colindres, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Nicaragua.

**Mr. Moncada Colindres** (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): I bring a message of peace from the people of Nicaragua and from President and Commander Daniel Ortega and Vice-President Rosario Murillo.

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development three years ago, we have continued to witness a world in crisis, the result of unbridled capitalism, interference in the affairs of others and the violation of international law and the sovereignty of our peoples through the use of force, as well as attempts at coups d'état and destabilization efforts that threaten our prospects for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda. Nicaragua has resisted attempts at regime change. Our country has once again prevailed and achieved peace, fraternal coexistence and a gradual return to normal daily life. The attempted coup d'état that we overcame in Nicaragua was the result of such interventionism, and its legacy has entailed grave consequences for us, including economic damage, death, destruction and terrorism disguised as peaceful protest, characterized by the savage killing of citizens and policemen, the setting on fire of public and private property, assaults, rights violations, extortion, torture and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment.

In the region, Nicaragua is widely recognized as an agent of regional stability, peace and security with its exemplary benchmark achievements in economic, political and social development, poverty reduction, gender equality and public security, all of which are included in the State policies that we continue to develop and that insulate our country from international organized crime, local and transnational gangs, terrorism and narcoactivity. The Government and the people of Nicaragua are staunch defenders of the principles of independence and sovereignty, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We therefore demand that an end be put to all interventionist policies, which violate international law, including interventionist activities in Nicaragua and brotherly nations of the Americas and the world.

The Government and the people of Nicaragua have worked persistently to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. As of April our country recorded sustained annual growth of approximately 4.7 per cent. Our socioeconomic projects and programmes to eradicate overall poverty at the national level have succeeded in decreasing poverty from 42.5 per cent in 2009 to 24.9 per cent in 2016. Extreme poverty decreased from 14.6 per cent in 2009 to 6.9 per cent in 2016. Today, we are once again facing the threat of the United States, which seeks to halt the social, economic and cultural development of our people. We condemn such interventionism, which is manifested in the introduction of a law in the United States Congress requiring international financial institutions to refuse to issue loans to Nicaragua.

For Nicaragua, contributing to international peace is synonymous with achieving general and complete nuclear disarmament. We have therefore signed and ratified the recent Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and call on countries to ratify that historic Treaty. The Government of the Republic of Nicaragua has supported the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, based on dialogue and communication between the authorities of both parties. We welcome the rapprochement between the two Koreas and the holding of the third inter-Korean summit, as well as the Joint Declaration that the two Korean leaders agreed on in September in Pyongyang and which is seen as a great stride forward in alleviating tensions and meaningfully obviating the danger of war on the entire peninsula. The Government of the Republic of Nicaragua hopes that nuclear weapons will be dismantled in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, and that the countries involved will cooperate and consequently ensure firm and lasting peace on the Korean peninsula.

The Government of Nicaragua supports nuclear negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Iran

and the E3/EU+3, that is China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States, along with the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, which resulted in the finalization of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on 14 July 2015. We stress that that agreement demonstrates that dialogue and diplomacy are the most appropriate means for solving such problems and are the essential components that enable multilateralism to work.

Nicaragua condemns the criminal blockade against the sisterly Republic of Cuba and all of the associated extraterritorial measures and ramifications. Nicaragua rejects all coercive economic measures that seek to bend the will and spirit of freedom and sovereignty of peoples and Governments. Our country finds the use of unilateral coercive economic measures to be a political and selective instrument aimed at trying to illegally change Governments, and it is therefore unacceptable. This year we will once again vote against the unjust blockade imposed by the United States. Our sisterly Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Bolivarian People and the legitimate Government of President Nicolás Maduro Moros can count on our unconditional solidarity. We have condemned the assassination attempt against President Nicolás Maduro Moros and the threat of military intervention against the Bolivarian people and Republic of Venezuela.

We must continue to promote decolonization in the world, and we therefore support the Palestinian, Sahrawi and Puerto Rican peoples and the Argentine Malvinas Islands. Nicaragua advocates for the two-State solution, that is, the State of Israel and the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital, within the 1967 borders, living in peace and harmony. We reiterate our complete solidarity with the Government and the people of Syria in their struggle against international terrorism and in defence of their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Humankind continues to seek peace. Seventy-three years after its founding, the Organization has not yet managed to fully meet the goals set out with regard to peace. Given such a regrettable state of affairs, the call for reinventing the United Nations, as former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua, Father Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, proposed during his presidency of the General Assembly (see A/63/PV.1), is more urgent than ever. To that end, we must promote the transformation needed to ensure that the Organization serves the interests of every one of its Members and all of humankind. We underscore that at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly in 2008, during his presidency, the late Father Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, whom we fittingly referred to as the Chancellor of Dignity of Nicaragua, planned and fought, with those ideas in mind, wishing to fulfil Nicaragua's mandate to lay the groundwork for discussions on such a transformation, by introducing a proposal for a "universal declaration of the common good of the Earth and humanity" (*A/63/PV.105, p.32*), as the first indispensable step towards reinventing the United Nations.

We need urgent action to combat climate change. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities remains in force, and those primarily responsible for the largest volume of the emissions, destruction, degradation and imbalances in nature must recognize the losses and damages suffered by the rest of us and help with the recovery of Mother Earth and the peoples of the world. In order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals, we need to repeal the unilateral and coercive measures that are impeding our countries' development programmes and which are in violation of international law. We must work to achieve justice, peace, respect, dialogue and sovereign security in the world. To that end, we must encourage making the changes necessary so that the Organization can serve the interests of all its Members.

Our Government and our people advocate for a world with values, a world in which we, as human beings, can rely on what is best within us to foster the best possible conditions for creating fair, sustainable, equitable, secure and sovereign development based on full access and sharing by every man and woman of scientific and technological advances relating to all aspects of our lives. We once again entreat the international community and hope that, at this seventy-third session of the General Assembly, the commitment that we are undertaking will result in an open process marked by profound reflection aimed at achieving the required transformation for reinventing and democratizing the United Nations.

In conclusion, we stress our commitment to continuing to fight for peace — a priority for the world and our people — and to ensuring that conflicts arising in various parts of the world can be overcome through dialogue and negotiations and that, above all, peoples and countries can be free of fear from the use or threat

of the use of force, a threat that the great Powers seek to impose on States that are small in population. In fact, they may be small in terms of development, but they are great in terms of their values and history.

**The Acting President**: I now call on His Excellency Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See.

**Archbishop Gallagher** (Holy See): At the outset, I wish to extend the cordial greetings of His Holiness, Pope Francis, to the President and to all of the delegations participating in this seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

As the international community marks the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on 10 December 1948, it is worthwhile to recall and re-emphasize its assertion that,

> "[The] recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."

The recognition of the inherent dignity of all human beings is the bedrock on which the pillars of the United Nations are grounded. It is the ultimate principle behind the founders' determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. It undergirds all fundamental human rights. It drives the search for justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other appropriate sources of international law, because so many abuses of human dignity begin with a failure to uphold laws that respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. It spurs individuals and societies to achieve social progress and better standards of life in greater freedom through what the Holy See calls "integral human development".

To speak of human dignity 70 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration means, above all, to restate the centrality and intrinsic worth of the human person and to reaffirm the inherent rights shared by all men and women, no matter how young or old, rich or poor, strong or vulnerable, healthy or sick, wanted or undesired, economically productive or incapacitated, or politically influential or insignificant. The world needs, in fact, to regain an all-encompassing vision of the human person, human dignity and human rights, as any reductive vision of the human person inevitably dehumanizes and effectively excludes certain persons from membership in the human race, opening the way to inequality, injustice and injury.

The seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration is also a favourable occasion on which to renew our shared commitment, not just in words, but also in practice to those rights that flow from every person's inherent dignity. The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/73/1) highlights that fact. Although there has been much progress made in the advancement of human rights at the global level, challenges to the protection of human rights are a global phenomenon. While it is heartening to read of the positive developments in the area of human rights accomplished in the past seven decades, it is sobering to note, however, that one in 10 children continues to be subjected to child labour, one in three people currently in detention is held without trial, 29 per cent of children under the age of 5 do not have birth registration and 250 million women were married when under the age of 15.

It is scandalous to see that human rights continue to be violated today, seven decades after the adoption of the Universal Declaration. The Declaration affirms that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person, and yet in many places those rights are not only not respected but their violations are even celebrated. Article 4 states that "[n]o one shall be held in slavery or servitude", yet tens of millions of people are ensnared by various forms of so-called modern slavery. Article 18 upholds the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and the right to change one's religion or belief, and the freedom to manifest, alone or in community with others, in public or private, that religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. Yet those rights are infringed upon, restricted or denied. In so many places, changing one's religion or even practising one's faith can lead to a death sentence or can serve as a reason to be discriminated against.

Earlier this year, in his address to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, Pope Francis noted some trends that, in the very name of the promotion of human rights, are in fact undermining the enjoyment of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He noted that, "debatable notions of human rights have been advanced that are at odds with the culture of many countries". He cautioned that that trend portends the "risk that, in the very name of human rights, we will see the rise of modern forms of ideological colonization by the stronger and

the wealthier to the detriment of the poorer and the most vulnerable".

The seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration affords the international community an occasion to recognize the damage that ideological interpretations or novel rights claims do, in principle and practice, to the human rights and fundamental freedoms actually enshrined in the Universal Declaration and translated into international law and conventions.

The Holy See is especially concerned about the increasingly narrow interpretation of the right to life, both at the national level and at the level of the treaty bodies and other human rights mechanisms. That tendency is particularly apparent within a current of the human rights discourse that refuses to recognize the inherent value and dignity of human life at every stage of its beginning, development and end. That approach seeks to create a hierarchy of human rights, by relativizing human dignity, assigning more value and greater rights to the strong and healthy, while discarding the weak. That ideology, unfortunately present in various parts of the United Nations human rights system, leads to some grave inequalities and injustices, often ignoring children in the womb and treating the lives of the elderly and persons with disabilities as expendable or indeed as a burden to society.

While freedom is crucial to the ability of every person to express his or her unique identity, the reduction of a person's dignity to his or her capacity for self-expression and affirmation is always a grave error and a sign that society is losing its ability to recognize the value and importance of every human life, no matter how vulnerable. It is worth recalling here Pope Francis's words during a general audience with the elderly on 4 March 2015. He said that "a society without proximity, where gratuity and affection without compensation — between strangers as well — is disappearing, is a perverse society".

The same dehumanization occurs when people are reduced to the crimes they may have committed, the country to which they may belong or to their productive capacity. The Holy See reaffirms that the quality of a civilization depends also on how it treats the weakest, the indigent, the elderly, persons with disability, and on the place that it gives them in community life.

Article 22 of the Universal Declaration affirms that everyone has the right to social security and to the realization of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable to his or her dignity and the free development of his or her personality. Frequently though, because of war and conflict, poverty, natural disasters and other similar causes, that right cannot be realized in one's place of birth or residence. Such situations prompt millions to leave their place of residence in order to fulfil their basic human needs elsewhere and to search elsewhere for well-being and happiness for themselves and their loved ones.

This year, a long and comprehensive process has been completed aimed at addressing the challenges of international migration. For the first time ever, the international community has engaged in an open and transparent debate on the phenomenon of those movements and on what is needed to manage migration in a more safe, orderly and regular manner. The result is the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which will be adopted this coming December at an international conference to be held in Marrakech, Morocco.

The coming global compacts, one for migration and the other on refugees, will provide a continuum of protection for all those forced to flee from their place of residence, including those displaced by sudden-onset and slow-onset natural disasters, climate change and environmental degradation, ensuring that no one is left behind. Taken together, the compacts will affirm our shared responsibility, in the pursuit of the common good, to care for those most in need of solidarity and for those whose dignity and fundamental human rights are most at risk.

The strain that many States face in responding to mixed flows, especially when they are unpredictable and overwhelming, was given thorough consideration. What became apparent was not only the need for increased international solidarity and burden- and responsibility-sharing, but also the prior commitment of States to

> "work together to create conditions that allow communities and individuals to live in safety and dignity in their own countries" (*A/CONF.231/3, annex, para. 13*).

That includes not only increased investment in education and basic health-care infrastructure and services, but also capacity-building and training for young people, with a view to helping them find their place and affirm their dignity in an increasingly destabilizing global economy. It also requires addressing the root

causes and driving factors that lead to displacement before the people in question are constrained to leave their homelands.

In order to respect every person's human dignity, it is indispensable also to create the conditions necessary for the realization of the right to remain. Those conditions include the protection of the family as the basic unit of society. When individuals are forced to leave their families behind, often in search of a better life for their children and loved ones, the very fabric of society begins to unravel. There is no substitute for family unity, which must be upheld, both for those who remain, as well as for those on the move.

Pope Francis described those shared responsibilities and authentic solidarity in four verbs: to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate. The Holy See hopes that the honest effort expended on the global compacts will ensure, in line with those four steps, respect for migrants' and refugees' rights and dignity in a spirit of international solidarity while recognizing the sovereign right of States to determine their national migration policy in light of their obligations under international law. In a recent homily during a Holy Mass for Migrants on 6 July 2018, Pope Francis said:

> "Faced with the challenges of contemporary movements of migration, the only reasonable response is one of solidarity and mercy... A just policy is one at the service of the person, of every person involved; a policy that provides for solutions that can ensure security [and] respect for the rights and dignity of all; a policy concerned with the good of one's own country, while taking into account that of others in an ever more interconnected world."

The Holy See hopes that the global compacts will serve as useful tools for good migration management at every level and a common resource for achieving our shared responsibility, given the plight of refugees, and as reference points for international cooperation in the management of migration and the care for refugees.

The Universal Declaration reminds us that the defence of the "inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of ... peace in the world". Article 1 affirms that we are "endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood". Wars and armed conflicts are, therefore, not only violations of reason, conscience and brotherhood, but they also cause the worst violations of human dignity and basic human rights.

In the Middle East, the multifaceted political and diplomatic pressures and violence, together with the various humanitarian situations, especially in Syria, must be adequately and urgently addressed by the international community. Furthermore, all interested parties must also demonstrate a unified will to strive for an end to violence and work to reach, as Pope Francis stated, a solution that can enable Palestinians and Israelis alike to live at last in peace within clearly established and internationally recognized borders, thus implementing the two-State solution.

The Holy See remains concerned about the ongoing political tensions and instability in Nicaragua and Venezuela, especially with regard to the humanitarian crisis in the latter. There is also a need to promote a genuine public awareness of a number of ongoing situations of conflict with a view to reaching a negotiated and peaceful solution, especially in Ukraine, Libya and the Central African Republic, among others. The Holy See considers the recent political developments in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, as positive signs toward the building of peaceful and democratic societies based on the firm hope that agreements reached will be mutually respected. War and armed conflict can be prevented only by promoting and protecting the dignity of every human life and by fostering a culture of peace animated by sincere mutual respect, dialogue and solidarity. The tragedy of the First World War, whose end 100 years ago we will mark in November, teaches us, as Pope Francis stated, that victory must not be followed by the humiliation of a defeated foe and that peace can be achieved only when nations can discuss matters on equal terms.

A culture of peace implies fighting injustice and rooting out, in a non-violent way, the causes of discord that lead to wars. The pursuit of peace requires renouncing the use of violence to vindicate one's rights, since countering violence with violence leads to more death and destruction, deeper resentment and hatred lasting for decades, atrocities and forced mass migrations, and the diversion of vast amounts of resources from development to military ends. Fostering a culture of peace likewise entails the intensification of our efforts to achieve disarmament and the rejection of the use of force in the conduct of international affairs.

Every effort in that direction, however modest, helps to build a culture of peace.

The Holy See underlines the deep bonds between the promotion of the culture of peace and the strengthening of disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. The proliferation of weapons, in fact, aggravates conflicts and generates vast human and material costs, hindering human and economic development and the search for lasting peace. As the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/73/1) emphasizes, we need to reinvigorate disarmament, because it is pivotal to preserving human society through the prevention of conflict and the reduction of violence, ar to saving lives and ensuring a safer world. In that perspective, the Holy See is firmly committed to the full implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the various programmes of action in the nuclear, chemical and biological weapons fields, as well as those relating to cluster munitions, anti-personnel mines and small arms and light weapons.

The responsibility to defend human dignity and rights is particularly acute in situations where people fall victim to genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Today, at a time when the many national and regional conflicts add up to what Pope Francis has called a third world war fought piecemeal, the need to protect populations is more urgent than ever. It is worthwhile to recall that, although the responsibility to protect was defined only at the 2005 World Summit, it has always been at the root of the United Nations.

Already in the early part of the sixteenth century, when the concept of national sovereign States was emerging, the Spanish friar Francisco de Vitoria described the responsibility of governors to protect their citizens as an aspect of natural reason shared by all nations and a rule for an international order whose task is to regulate relations between peoples. The principles that De Vitoria articulated in the sixteenth century have been enshrined in the 2005 World Summit Outcome document (resolution 60/1). The Holy See upholds the perennial validity of the responsibility to protect and calls for its full, impartial and consistent implementation. Such an implementation necessarily entails fulfilling all obligations under international human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as condemning any deliberate attacks against civilian targets. It means preventing or stopping crimes against humanity and protecting populations from them through greater legal, political and moral accountability.

Peace requires forgiveness. Forgiveness is central to reconciliation and peacebuilding, since it makes possible the healing and rebuilding of human relations. Forgiveness is not opposed to justice, but it is rather its fulfilment, since it leads to the healing of the wounds that fester in human hearts, while acknowledging the evil that has been committed. A culture of peace involves, therefore, the courageous choice of not allowing the wounds of the past to bleed into the present, so that we can walk together towards reconciliation. Every religion is called upon to assist in the reconciliation effort by promoting peace. Equally important is the testimony given when different religions come together to pray and work for peace. Interreligious and intercultural dialogue provides the world with a paradigm to share their respective cultural patrimony, grow in mutual appreciation of others' perspectives, heal past wounds, and journey together toward peace and human development. Religious men and women, moved as they are to revere each other's God-given dignity, have a special responsibility to bear witness by respectful and constructive dialogue among cultures.

Although, even today, there are some acts of religiously motivated violence, the response to them must not be a renewed form of retaliatory justice, but rather authentic dialogue between the various religious communities on the basis of the joint and unequivocal belief that killing others in the name of God offends God himself. Terrorism is not an outgrowth of properly understood religion, but rather the fruit of a profound spiritual poverty. Defeating it requires the joint contribution of all religious and political leaders. Religious leaders must therefore promote those values that foster the love of one's neighbour. For their part, political leaders must ensure the enjoyment of the right to religious freedom, while acknowledging religion's positive contribution to the building of a civil society that sees no opposition between the participation in the political community and the spiritual dimension of life. They must also ensure that there are no conditions — such as poverty, insufficient support for families and inadequate investment in education and culture — that favour the spread of fundamentalism.

The Holy See wishes to reaffirm its heartfelt concern for all victims of terrorism. At the same time, it wishes to underline that all measures to combat terrorist activities must fully respect human rights. In particular,

counter-terrorism measures should not hinder the legitimate work of charitable organizations, including those motivated by faith, aimed at caring for vulnerable populations. It must be recognized that humanitarian assistance in underdeveloped countries and in crisis zones contributes positively to the prevention of terrorism and retaliatory violence, which thereby fosters the enjoyment of human rights and the respect for dignity. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, terrorism is a worldwide scourge and requires a globally coordinated response. The Holy See welcomes all efforts to enhance multilateral cooperation against terrorism, such as the recent United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that the equal rights of men and women flow from their inherent dignity and worth. It is therefore necessary to adopt all measures needed to promote equality in rights and the full and equal participation of women and men in society.

While history books sing the victories of emperors and warriors, all of civilization owes an unpayable debt of gratitude to the less chronicled or even unknown contributions of women and men that have shaped civilizations. While textbooks normally obsess about the names at the top of political hierarchies and are preoccupied fundamentally with economic and military trends, it is worth recalling that genuine human progress happens more fundamentally in the relations that human beings have with one another and in the way in which human beings care for one another.

Today, women and men are at the forefront of the revolution of tenderness that Pope Francis has insisted the world urgently needs. In response to various forms of human suffering and to material, emotional or even spiritual necessities, people need help and remedies that accord with the fullness of their human dignity. Having gone through multiple traumas, they need to be cared for and treated with great sensitivity and attention.

Beyond their professional competence and technical knowledge, women have, indeed, shown a special capacity for recognizing, affirming, nurturing and defending the inherent dignity of others, and for contributing greatly to efforts aimed at promoting a peaceful, respectful and harmonious world. As Pope Francis has affirmed, women look at life through their own eyes, and men are not able to look at life in the way that women do. The way of viewing a problem, of seeing anything, is different for a woman compared to a man. They must be complementary. The true progress in humanity that is dramatically needed in our challenged world will also depend on the full participation of women on an equal and same footing with men in the civil, political, social, economic or cultural fields.

We note with great concern that women's indispensable role is often undervalued and can even be a vehicle for the exploitation and violation of their dignity and fundamental rights. Today, women still face a variety of challenges and difficulties in various parts of the world. They experience discrimination in the workplace; they are often forced to choose between work and family; and they disproportionately suffer in conflict situations. In poor and developing countries, women bear the heaviest burdens: it is they who travel many miles in search of water, who too often do not have access even to the most basic medical assistance that they need in childbirth, and who are kidnapped for sexual exploitation or forced into marriage. At times, they are even denied the right to life simply for being female.

The authentic advancement of women entails absolute respect for their inherent dignity, while acknowledging their crucial roles, not only in the various spheres of society, but also in the family, as equal participants in marriage as spouses. It is therefore contradictory to seek to promote women's empowerment while suppressing their unique natural potentialities in the name of some particular interests or in the exercise of an ideological agenda. It is equally contradictory when women's irreplaceable contribution to society through motherhood is stigmatized as an obstacle to their advancement and empowerment, instead of being acknowledged, supported and accompanied with measures aimed at alleviating the difficulties that they may encounter. The Holy See wishes to avail itself of this occasion to express grateful appreciation for all those women who, sometimes heroically, have raised and educated generations of responsible daughters and sons. The world owes them gratitude and esteem, support and solidarity.

The Universal Declaration understands human dignity as the dignity of the person within society, since the person always exists in relation to others. Article 16, paragraph 3, of the Declaration stresses that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society

and the State. Article 25 affirms that motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. Article 26 underlines that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Those principles have perennial validity, even in the midst of changing societies, and must be upheld for the good of every child, every family and every society. As Pope Francis reminds us, the strength of the family lies in its capacity to love and to teach how to love. The family is a school of humanity, a school that teaches us to open our hearts to others' needs, to be attentive to their lives. As such, it remains a model, as well as a reference, for the promotion of harmony within society and among the family of nations.

The family is the greatest treasure for a country and for future generations. In particular, it is urgent to promote the protection of children today, as children are regularly victims of armed conflict, violence, various forms of exploitation and abuse, and are exposed to hunger and extreme poverty. The way we care for every child shows the depth of our humanity and of our appreciation for the dignity and rights of each person. For its part, the Roman Catholic Church is committed, at all levels, not only to promoting the protection of children, but also to creating safe environments for them in its own institutions, in order to address the heinous scourge of sexual abuse and violence against children.

When the Universal Declaration speaks about development, it also does so with regard to the free and full development of the human person. For the Holy See, development must always be integral, which means, in the words of Pope Paul VI, that it cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. Authentic development must be well rounded, and it must foster the development of each person and of the whole person. Respect for human rights and human dignity, based on a profound appreciation of the whole person and every person, is essential for efforts to eradicate extreme poverty and to promote integral human development. Without paying attention to those fundamental anthropological coordinates, the sustainable development agenda would be reduced to its economic, environmental or sociological elements.

Extreme poverty is more than a socioeconomic problem; it is also an ethical one, flowing from a globalization of indifference exacerbated by consumerism. The alternative to that individualistic, indifferent and self-centred approach is an interpersonal one that involves personal, social, economic and environmental advancement and solidarity. That principle of interconnectedness is found in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In adopting those documents, we committed ourselves to promoting integral and authentic development in harmony with nature. We should put all our efforts into achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the demanding goals of the Paris Agreement. The Holy See hopes that the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Katowice, Poland, this December, will provide a strong step in that direction through a good and effective advancement on the work programme of the Paris Agreement.

The Secretary-General has described in his report (E/2018/64) some of the recent progress made in the area of integral development across the world. The mortality rate of children under 5has dropped by 47 per cent in the past 10 years. The proportion of the population of the least developed countries with access to electricity has more than doubled since 2000. Unemployment has decreased in many countries, as various institutions and frameworks needed for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda have been put into place.

The report stresses, however, that progress has been uneven and too slow to meet the ambitious goals of the Agenda. By 2015, 30 per cent of people worldwide still did not have access to safe drinking water, while 60 per cent did not have access to adequate sanitation. After a prolonged decline, world hunger has been rising again. The recent 2018 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development showed that there is an urgent need to step up efforts focused on energy, water and ecosystems. Moreover, the recent rise in trade tensions and the growing scepticism with regard to multilateralism endanger the coordinated global effort to sustainable development for all.

The centrality of the human person must also be reaffirmed in the context of the current environmental crisis. As Pope Francis has reminded us, we are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis that is both social and environmental. That complex reality involves

not only our common home but also our partners on this planet and therefore demands an integrated ethical approach that simultaneously cares for the environment while it combats poverty and exclusion, assures the collective enjoyment of the common good, and fosters intergenerational solidarity.

*The President took the Chair.*

Such an approach requires taking with the utmost seriousness our responsibility to care for our precious natural resources and to protect those persons, especially the poorest, who depend on them for their daily subsistence. I am thinking, above all, of issues relating to food security and food safety, as well as access to clean water and the management of the oceans. Without an approach informed by ethical considerations, we are left with an economic system where financial gain and political power are placed above the good of the environment and those most vulnerable. An ethical approach to the current crisis must also inspire solidarity with future generations. As Pope Francis reminds us, intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us. While care for our common home benefits us, it is also a gift to future generations, sparing them from paying the price of environmental deterioration and ensuring that they will be able to enjoy its beauty, wonder and manifold endowment.

**The President**: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Virasakdi Futrakul, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.

**Mr. Futrakul** (Thailand): It is a great honour for me to represent the Kingdom of Thailand in the Assembly of the nations of the world. Allow me, at the outset, to express our deepest condolences to the Government and the people of Viet Nam on the passing of President Trần Đại Quang. His dedication to Viet Nam and his contributions to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will always be remembered with respect. I would also like to express our heartfelt sympathy to and solidarity with the Government and the people of Indonesia for the terrible loss of lives and the injuries and damage following the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami that hit the island of Sulawesi this past week. I also join others in paying tribute to the memory of the late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan. His efforts to incorporate human rights into the work of all United Nations organs has brought the United Nations closer to the people. He will be long remembered as the Secretary-General who tried to make the world more humane.

We are living in a world characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. The United Nations needs to adapt to meet the challenges of that environment, so that it can fulfil its noble mission of peace and security, development and human rights. Thailand therefore supports the efforts of Secretary-General Guterres to reform the United Nations system so as to make it more effective, efficient and human-centred. Thailand has been active in translating the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations into practices aimed at promoting peace and security, fostering sustainable development and safeguarding human rights.

On peace and security, Thailand supports efforts to make the Security Council more representative, more inclusive and more democratic. We support the Secretary-General's commitment to forge stronger linkages between peace, security and sustainable development, as we believe that it is indeed the economic and social development of the communities and the people that lies at the centre of sustaining peace. Since 1950, over 27,000 Thai military and police personnel, men and women, have proudly served in more than 20 United Nations peacekeeping and related missions. And we will do more. In addition to a number of military and police officers who are currently stationed with three peacekeeping missions, we are getting ready to deploy a horizontal military engineering company to join the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. Wherever Thai peacekeepers go, they simultaneously seek to keep peace and foster sustainable development and to engage in both peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

Thailand also supports a rules-based international order. Last year, Thailand became one of the first States to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. And just this past week, I deposited our instrument of ratification for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which complements ASEAN's objective of making South-East Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone. We also support efforts to achieve a peaceful and denuclearized Korean peninsula. We hope, furthermore, to see one day a nuclear-weapon-free Indo-Pacific region. The late United States Senator from New York, Robert Kennedy, paraphrasing George Bernard Shaw, once said, "Some [men] see things as they are, and [ask] 'why?' I dream [of] things that never

were and [ask], 'Why not?'". Today all 10 South-East Asian nations have ratified the CTBT — why have the countries in the Indo-Pacific region not all done so? As an Asian proverb states, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. South-East Asia has taken that first step towards a nuclear-weapon-free region. Why have the rest of the Indo-Pacific countries not all done so?

On development, Thailand supports the reform of the United Nations development system with a view to making it more effective, efficient and people-centred. We are also reforming our whole country as we implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Committing ourselves to realizing the SDGs is one thing, but implementing them locally is another. That is why the Thai Government strives to empower our local communities, in urban and rural areas, to change for the better, to improve the way we produce and consume, the way we work and travel, and the way we live, in order to achieve sustainability and realize the SDGs. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, we must be the change that we wish to see in the world. Sustainable development can be achieved only when it is inclusive and responds to the needs of people in the society concerned. In Thailand, we have launched our reforms based on what we have called the "*pracharat* principle" or the public-private-people partnership. Under that principle, the people, the Government and the private sector work closely together to pursue sustainable development. We are applying that holistic approach, uniting all three sectors — public, private and people — so as to ensure that all stakeholders are engaged in the country's development efforts, leaving no one behind.

In realizing Sustainable Development Goal 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources, Thailand is the first Asian country to join a global initiative to clean up the oceans around our tourist hotspots, such as Koh Samui, Koh Tao and the famous Phuket. We are also working on raising public awareness of climate change. We are also cooperating with other countries in the region to mitigate the risks of natural disasters, such as the one that just hit Indonesia. Last year, in order to mitigate the human-caused disaster of pollution, in particular in the form of plastic garbage in the seas and oceans, Thailand hosted the ASEAN Conference on Reducing Marine Debris in the ASEAN Region aimed at pooling our efforts to clean the seas in our region. Thailand also hosted the ASEAN-China Workshop on Marine Environmental Protection in the South China Sea, which sought to map a strategy to clean up our regional seas. In those efforts, we are mindful of the warning that marine biologist Rachel Carson gave in her book *The Sea Around Us*, writing that it is a curious situation that the sea, from which life first arose, should now be threatened by the activities of one form of that life. But the sea, though changed in a sinister way, will continue to exist; the threat is rather to life itself. When we seek to save the seas and the oceans, we are in fact seeking to save humankind.

On human rights, we are finalizing the draft of our fourth national human rights plan for the period 2019-2023, which seeks to address a range of human rights challenges, including issues such as access to land and natural resources, the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and human rights defenders, and the freedom of the press. We are also drafting a national action plan on business and human rights so as to make our private sector an indispensable partner in mainstreaming human rights into all sectors of Thai society.

The Thai Government's policies seek to address human rights challenges in a structural manner and to lay the foundation for sustainable democracy in Thailand. In order to address discrimination and protect people in vulnerable situations, we have enacted the Gender Equality Act, various acts to protect vulnerable persons, the Justice Fund Act and the Equitable Education Fund Act. A number of new laws are also in the pipeline, such as a community forest bill that seeks to promote people's participation in natural resource management, a bill on community banks, a land-tax bill to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor, and a bill for the prevention and elimination of forced labour aimed at protecting the rights of workers and at tackling trafficking in persons. Thailand recently ratified the International Labour Organization's Protocol to Convention No. 29, on forced labour, as a part of our continued effort to improve Thai labour standards.

The Thai Government firmly believes that engagement with civil society is key to an inclusive approach to human rights and sustainable development. Our relevant agencies have been holding periodic consultations with non-governmental organizations working on sustainable development and human rights issues, including in our voluntary national review on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and our national presentations to human rights treaty bodies.

Our commitment to the three pillars of the United Nations, namely, peace and security, development and human rights, has contributed positively to the stability and prosperity of the Kingdom of Thailand. Since the current Government assumed office four years ago, the rate of growth of Thailand's gross domestic product (GDP) has risen from 0.9 per cent in 2014 to 3.9 per cent. This year, our GDP is expected to grow by between 4.4 and 4.9 per cent. National competitiveness has risen from thirty-seventh place in 2014 to thirty-second place last year. Tourists have returned, with more than 35 million visitors to Thailand last year. This year, the number of tourists coming to Thailand is expected to be close to 40 million, thereby reflecting tourists' confidence in Thailand's peace and security.

Our efforts to realize the SDGs have also improved our people's lives. The maternal mortality ratio stands at 26.6 deaths per 100,000 live births, and the mortality rate of children under 5 is at 8.6 per 1,000 live births. People's access to universal health care stands at 99.9 per cent. Access to education at the primary level is at 100 per cent, lower secondary school at 88.3 per cent and upper secondary school at 72.7 per cent. Furthermore, 60 per cent of our labour force are women. In our efforts to realize the SDGs, the Royal Thai Government has been guided by His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej's sufficiency economy philosophy.

The sufficiency economy philosophy teaches us that development must be home-grown and rooted within each citizen in order to be sustainable — in other words, strength from within builds strength on the outside. The Government has therefore focused our resources so as to empower households and communities through our policies with regard to community banking, community land deeds, community forests, lifting household debts and providing universal health coverage. Thailand has also shared our philosophy of development, the sufficiency economy philosophy, with the Group of 77 and China, which has endorsed it as a development model. We have also been working with over twenty countries around the world under the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy for SDGs Partnership, sharing our developmental approach.

Looking ahead, the Royal Thai Government is laying a strong foundation for stability and development through its twenty-year national strategies. They will transform our country into a strong and modern economy that is ready to cope with the present-day volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment and the challenges that we will face throughout the remainder of the twenty-first century.

Thailand was the birthplace of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In 2019, Thailand will assume the chairmanship of ASEAN. Our goal during our chairmanship of ASEAN is to foster the creation of a truly people-centred community, where no one is left behind. Such a community will need to be resilient, dynamic, inclusive and forward-looking. During our chairmanship of ASEAN, we will further strengthen our partnership with the United Nations on its three noble missions: peace and security, sustainable development and human rights.

In our partnership with the United Nations on sustainable development, we believe that the Economic and Social Council can help shape directions and build policy coherence to support us in realizing the SDGs. Thailand will therefore seek membership in the Council for the term 2020-2022. We will try our utmost to support the Council in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I am also glad to announce that, in order to reaffirm our support for the repositioning of the United Nations development system, Thailand will contribute $200,000 to the special purpose trust fund to reinvigorate the resident coordinator system. That will enhance the work of the United Nations on the ground and make the Organization more relevant to all people.

As a small country, Thailand takes to heart the conviction of the late former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld that, ultimately, international law is the last defence of small countries. Thailand views the United Nations as an embodiment of international law in action and therefore pledges our full and wholehearted cooperation with the United Nations.

**The President**: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mahmadamin Mahmadaminov, Chair of the Delegation of the Republic of Tajikistan.

**Mr. Mahmadaminov** (Tajikistan): At the outset, Madam President, I would like to join previous speakers by extending, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, our sincere congratulations on your well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. We are confident that your wisdom, diplomatic experience and skills will contribute to the success of the current

session of the General Assembly. You can rest assured of my delegation's constant support and cooperation in that regard.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, on his able leadership during the previous session of the General Assembly.

We live in an ever-changing world. Unprecedented levels of instability and uncertainty are on the rise in many parts of the world. Global challenges such as climate change, terrorism and extremism, large-scale conflicts, inequality, poverty, food and water insecurity, lack of education and economic opportunities, and unemployment — to name but a few — further affect the status quo.

Today's global challenges exert pressure on the very foundations of the world order and the principles of international relations. They undermine the efforts of the international community to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals.

Under those circumstances, the theme for this session, namely, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", becomes very pertinent.

I echo the words of our late former Secretary-General, the great diplomat and outstanding human being Kofi Annan, who said,

> "We should be asking what should we be doing in this changing world. The world is changing and the United Nations has to change and adapt with it. We cannot be static."

As a universal institution, the United Nations should continue carrying out its noble mission of coordinating the efforts of its Member States aimed at enhancing the resilience of the countries as they seek to respond to modern threats and challenges. At the same time, Member States should also play an active part in that process by meeting their commitments, undertaken in the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, to restore stability and thereby to ensure development. Full implementation of the aforementioned milestone documents is required in order to address many of the socioeconomic problems that are the main drivers of extremism and terrorism.

My country believes that the response to the ever-increasing threat of terrorism and violent extremism should be comprehensive, with the United Nations as a key coordinator. The efforts should be focused on the elimination of the military infrastructure of international terrorism, on depriving it of political, military and financial support, and on preventing the use of information and communications technologies for the radicalization of minds, recruitment and propaganda messages for extremism and violence.

In order to discuss those issues, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, in close cooperation with the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union and some partner countries, convened, in Dushanbe on 3 to 4 May, the high-level international conference on countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. We are confident that the Dushanbe conference served as an excellent platform for constructive and fruitful cooperation by, inter alia, contributing to the achievement of a general recognition of the negative impact and consequences of the current challenges, exploring possibilities for strengthening partnership and cooperation at all levels, and exchanging experiences in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. Furthermore, in order to address the evolving transnational threat posed by terrorist groups and their affiliated member States, the United Nations should continue to strengthen and promote the effective use of the necessary tools and measures.

It is essential that we jointly search for ways to address poverty, the negative impact of globalization, and the prevention and resolution of conflicts. There is also a need to strengthen intercultural and interfaith dialogue, mutual trust and tolerance. In that context, the United Nations remains a critically important platform for achieving consensus on the main issues of international security and development, as well as for the coordination of joint actions on the part of the international community aimed at addressing the challenges and threats of the contemporary world.

Peace is the main prerequisite for creating equitable and sustainable societies across the world. We therefore believe that stable peace in the Middle East can be achieved only through a comprehensive settlement of the crisis, which in turn will contribute to enhancing global security. We support international and regional efforts aimed at restoring and strengthening peace and stability in the Middle East, including the efforts

to further the resumption and acceleration of credible negotiations within the Middle East peace process.

We also support the international strategy for a comprehensive settlement and for post-conflict rehabilitation in Afghanistan. We need to strengthen our assistance to the Government of Afghanistan, especially during Afghanistan's transformation decade (2015-2024). Urgent socioeconomic recovery is a must for the development and prosperity of Afghanistan. Targeted assistance to that war-torn country, aimed at economic recovery, strengthening the social sphere and creating new jobs, should be expanded. To that end, the involvement of Afghanistan in the process of multifaceted regional cooperation is critical for the success of the efforts undertaken by the international community.

We are willing to take part in the rehabilitation of the social and economic infrastructure of Afghanistan by connecting the transport arteries of our two countries, by creating an energy bridge through the Central Asia-South Asia power project (CASA-1000), and by providing the Afghan population with essential commodities and by training specialists.

We are in the third year of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The recent High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development has vividly demonstrated that, despite certain progress, there are early signs that a number of countries are not on track to reach the SDGs by 2030. It is alarming to observe that situation, particularly at the stage when the countries have just started incorporating the 2030 Agenda into and aligning it with their national development strategies. The mistakes of the era of the Millennium Development Goals should not be repeated. For that reason, there is an urgent need to step up efforts on all fronts aimed at achieving our ambitious goal, namely, to transform our world for the better by 2030.

The first step to be undertaken is to strengthen the means of implementation, especially for the developing countries. The mobilization of financial resources, including official development assistance, long-term investments, revitalized global partnerships, capacity-building and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to the developing countries, is needed in order to adequately attain the SDGs in a timely manner by 2030.

Secondly, national development efforts need to be supported by an enabling international economic environment. It is essential to revitalize international trade and investments — the main engines of economic growth and development. Effective regional cooperation should also facilitate the achievement of sustainable development. As we pledged to leave no one behind in our collective journey, it is imperative to recognize that each country faces specific challenges in achieving the 2030 Agenda, in particular the most vulnerable countries, such as the African countries, the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States. We need, therefore, to take into account the different national realities, capacities and levels of development of those vulnerable countries and scale up our assistance to them.

With that in mind, we supported and welcomed the Secretary-General's reform of the United Nations development system aimed at enhancing the United Nations contribution to sustainable development. We believe that the new changes will transform the United Nations system and will make it more capable of supporting the 2030 Agenda and delivering better on the ground.

The year 2018 was important for the water agenda, not only for Tajikistan, a country that actively advances that agenda, but also for the entire water community across the globe. We witnessed a series of milestone events, starting in Brazil with the eighth World Water Forum, then the launch of the Water Action Decade in New York, followed by the High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" 2018-2028, which was held in Dushanbe, and culminating in New York with the 2018 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Each of those events had a profound impact and made a significant contribution to the overall advancement of SDG 6 and other water-related Goals of the 2030 Agenda. For instance, the joint United Nations and Tajikistan International High-level Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028, held in Dushanbe from 20 to 22 June, brought together approximately 1,500 people from 111 countries. The Conference also provided a timely and necessary platform for elaborating recommendations in the run-

up to the High-level Political Forum, where SDG 6 had been reviewed.

Among other things, the Conference helped to increase the attention paid to the water-related SDGs and targets at all levels and to the interlinkages between various Goals and targets; to strengthen cooperation and partnerships at all levels aimed at achieving the water-related SDGs; to better understand how water contributes to achieving sustainability and how the lack of sustainability impacts water resources; to discuss the role of the Dushanbe Conference in the implementation of the International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development; and, most importantly, to discuss the importance of specific means of implementation, including monitoring, financing, capacity-development, innovation, technology, knowledge, information, data and best practices. It also helped to promote advocacy and networking and encouraged partnerships for action.

Encouraged by the success of the Dushanbe Conference and in fulfilment of the mandate of resolution 71/222, which declared the period of 2018-2028 as an International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development, Tajikistan is going to submit a draft resolution to the General Assembly on the midterm review of the implementation of the Decade this fall. We sincerely hope that, based on the success of the Water Decade resolution, which was sponsored in 2016 by the majority of Member States, the draft resolution will also enjoy their valuable support this time.

**The President**: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Bakhtiyor Ibragimov, Chair of the Delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

**Mr. Ibragimov** (Uzbekistan): Let me express my sincere gratitude for this opportunity to address the Assembly today from this rostrum.

I would like to congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I would also like to express our gratitude to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for his effective work at the helm of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

Today, the Republic of Uzbekistan has entered an important stage of radical and dynamic transformations. Its goal is to strengthen and further develop a democratic, law-governed State with an open and socially oriented market economy and a vibrant civil society, in which the main values are rights, freedoms and the legal interests of individuals. At the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, we adopted a five-year action strategy aimed at making fundamental changes in the economy, State governance, legal and social spheres, security, and at ensuring inter-ethnic and interconfessional peace and harmony. The principle that the people should not serve State bodies, but rather that State bodies should serve the people has become a cornerstone of the main programme of our democratic reforms.

Elevating the role of the Parliament and political parties, increasing the accountability and transparency of the executive branch, strengthening public institutions and developing civil society have become the practical embodiments of the constitutional principle that the people are the sole source of State power.

We are taking significant steps to streamline the national system for the protection of human rights and freedoms and are strengthening the independence of the judicial system. The use of child and forced labour has ceased. The recommendations of the United Nations Human Rights Council, treaty bodies, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and its Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief are being systematically implemented.

We have also carried out large-scale initiatives to liberalize the economy, create conditions for free entrepreneurship, ensure the inviolability of private property and improve the investment climate. We have introduced the free convertibility of our national currency, expanded access to bank credit and carried out tax and custom reforms. According to the World Bank report entitled "Doing Business 2018", Uzbekistan was among the 10 leading countries in terms of creating favourable conditions for doing business. As a result, Uzbekistan today has earned a reputation for being a thoroughly renewed, open and dynamically developing country. The chosen path of resolute reforms is irreversible and enjoys the broad support of the people of the country.

Today we are witnessing an unprecedented new alignment of power at the global and regional levels. A rethinking of the principles of international politics and economics, which until recently seemed to be unshakable, is under way. The world is becoming less predictable and unstable. The strength and effectiveness

of multilateral institutions and mechanisms designed to ensure international security has been put to the test.

In that regard, it is crucial to strengthen the central role of the United Nations in international relations, especially in the support of the three pillars of the Organization, namely, peace, the security and sustainable development of countries and regions, and the protection of human rights. Uzbekistan supports the steps taken by the leadership of the United Nations to streamline the governing system of the Organization, and calls for the gradual reform of its bodies, including the Security Council, by taking into account today's realities and challenges.

In addition, we are ready to actively participate in United Nations efforts to promote comprehensive peace, stability and development on the basis of the respect for human rights and freedoms, democratization and the rule of law. In that regard, Uzbekistan has, for the first time, presented its candidacy to the Human Rights Council for the period 2021-2023. We sincerely hope that our achievements in the area of human rights will provide a solid basis for gaining the support of States Members of the United Nations for Uzbekistan's candidacy.

We are also counting on the support of Member States to back the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan aimed at developing and adopting a United Nations convention on the rights of youth and a General Assembly draft resolution on enlightenment and religious tolerance. Those documents would facilitate efforts to effectively counter the threats of terrorism and the ideology of radicalism by tackling the vital socioeconomic problems facing our youth through the provision of better access to high-quality education and enlightenment in the spirit of tolerance, humanism and openness.

Uzbekistan has already begun advancing those initiatives. In June, working with our foreign partners, we held an international conference on the role of youth in confronting religious extremism and terrorism. At the end of the conference, the participants adopted the Samarkand Declaration on Increasing the Role of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization Leading to Terrorism.

In 2018, the international community celebrates the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In that regard, the President of Uzbekistan has signed a decree on a programme of events dedicated to that occasion. We have adopted a special State programme for promoting the essence and significance of that first universal document on human rights through the streamlining of domestic legislation on human rights and law enforcement and the facilitation of Uzbekistan's accession to new international treaties. Uzbekistan has also made a voluntary contribution to the budget of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the amount of $100,000.

Currently, we are also taking an initiative to convene an Asian international forum on human rights on 22 and 23 November 2018 as the final event of our targeted practical actions. The forum will take place in the city of Samarkand, which is, as is attested to by UNESCO, a crossroads of many of the world's cultures. Central Asia remains a main foreign-policy priority of Uzbekistan. Today, the situation in the region differs from the one that prevailed not long ago. Thanks to the joint efforts of the countries of the region, we have created in Central Asia, within a short period of time, a fundamentally new political atmosphere, raised the level of political trust and strengthened the traditionally friendly and good-neighbourly relations among ourselves.

The important outcome of all that work is the significant progress achieved in resolving such acute issues as the demarcation of borders, the management of water resources and the joint use of transport communications. It should be noted that those very issues had not only remained unresolved for an extended period of time but were also sources of regional tension. The agreements with neighbouring countries have enabled the opening of dozens of checkpoints on the borders of Uzbekistan and liberalized the visa regime. Uzbekistan's trade turnover with the States of the region increased by 20 per cent in 2017 and by 50 per cent during the first six months of this year.

In the near future, at our initiative, Uzbekistan is planning to convene a regional economic forum, which should serve as a permanently functioning platform for representatives of the business community to discuss regional projects in the trade, economic, investment and innovative cooperation fields. The first consultative meeting of the Heads of State of the Central Asian countries, held in March in Astana, became the bright symbol of a new era of regional cooperation. The next forum will take place in March 2019 in Tashkent. Most importantly, we are now more convinced that we are united not only by our joint past, but also by our common

future. The high level of regional interaction in Central Asia is receiving broad international support. In that regard, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to all our partners and friends who have recently rendered assistance in the preparation and adoption of a historic General Assembly resolution entitled "Strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian region" (resolution 72/283).

There is no doubt that that United Nations resolution acknowledges the formation of Central Asia as a single consolidated region, the countries of which — and I would like to put special emphasis on this — are capable through their joint efforts of solving common regional problems and ensuring prosperity, well-being and a worthy future for their population of 70 million people. In order to further deepen multifaceted cooperation in our region, Uzbekistan is proposing to develop and adopt a General Assembly draft resolution on developing sustainable tourism in Central Asia, which would facilitate the utilization of the unique tourism potential of the region, through which the great Silk Road stretched in the past, connecting East and West by trade, cultural and civilizational ties. The sustainable development of Central Asia requires the maintenance of the ecological equilibrium of the region, which in turn requires the mitigation of the consequences of the drying-up of the Aral Sea. For the past several years, Uzbekistan has implemented a number of large-scale projects in the Aral Sea zone.

Uzbekistan initiated the establishment of the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region, which was supported by the United Nations. The President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, during his address at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly last year (see A/72/PV.5) and at the recent summit of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, held on 24 August this year in Turkmenistan, again drew attention to that initiative. The establishment, under the auspices of the United Nations, of the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region is an attempt to highlight major risks that pose threats to the vulnerable population and also opens a new level of dialogue aimed at comprehensive and human-based solutions that focus on the real needs of people, taking into account the existing risks and challenges.

*Mr. Mohamed (Sudan), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

We hope for the overall support of the United Nations for this initiative taken by Uzbekistan. When we speak about Central Asia, we cannot but mention Afghanistan — a country that we consider to be a historical part of the culturo-civilizational space of our region. A stable Afghanistan is a prerequisite for the sustainable development of Central Asia as a whole. Recently, Uzbekistan significantly expanded its bilateral relations with Afghanistan, actively joined multilateral efforts to resolve the Afghan problem and is making a real contribution to restoring the country's economy, as well as to developing close trade, economic, transport and communication ties. In March, we convened the Tashkent Conference on Afghanistan. As the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, stated during his address at the Conference,

> "We are ready, at any stage of the peace process, to create all necessary conditions for organizing on the territory of Uzbekistan direct negotiations between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban Movement".

The main outcome of the Conference was the unanimous adoption of the Tashkent Declaration. It reinforced a firm consensus, at the regional and global levels, on the necessity of obtaining the earliest possible launch of direct negotiations between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban Movement, without any preliminary conditions. We are convinced that the readiness of the contending parties for mutual negotiations in the name of the vital interests of the multinational Afghan people will serve as a solid basis for advancing the peace process in that country. In Uzbekistan, we recognize that the success of our large-scale programme of democratic transformation, outlined in our current strategy of actions, as well as the success of our foreign policy initiatives, which are aimed at facilitating international peace and stability, will, to a large extent, depend on the support of our friends and partners and the international community as a whole. Uzbekistan is therefore open to a broad international dialogue. We are sincerely interested in Uzbekistan's further integration into global political and economic arrangements and in developing constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation with all interested countries.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Michel Xavier Biang, Chair of the Delegation of the Gabonese Republic.

**Mr. Biang** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I am pleased to congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her outstanding election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I am convinced that her qualities and proven knowledge of the United Nations will serve as an asset for the effective conduct of our work. She can count on Gabon's support throughout her mandate. Allow me also to applaud the remarkable work accomplished by her predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, during his term as President at the seventy-second session. I am also pleased to commend the tireless efforts of Secretary-General António Guterres in promoting the values and ideals of our Organization.

One month after the death of Mr. Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General and winner of the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize, I would like to pay tribute to that illustrious man of conviction and unity, whose commitment to peace and development will remain forever etched in our collective memory.

The theme of this session, namely, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", provides us with an opportunity to assess the scope of our actions in the light of our commitments and the many challenges of today's world. It is also an opportunity to develop new perspectives within the three pillars of our collective action, namely, the promotion of development, peace and security and human rights for the well-being of all of the peoples of the world.

Making the United Nations an Organization that is at the service of peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies is a great challenge in the current global context characterized by various threats and at a time when the values and ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations are often put to the test. In spite of the magnitude of those obstacles, I remain convinced that multilateralism is the ideal approach for building a more peaceful, just and inclusive world order. In that regard, it is essential for our Organization to modernize, transform itself and acquire the appropriate means for providing adequate responses to the multiple and complex imperatives that we face today. That is why I have welcomed, since the beginning of his mandate, the reforms of the Secretary-General to redeploy the architecture and resources of our Organization in line with the ambitions and aspirations of the peoples of humankind.

The peoples of the world — in particular young people and women — are demanding that we accelerate the rate of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is the bearer of political and socioeconomic progress and will have a direct impact on the living conditions of the world's populations. In that context, the fight against poverty must remain at the centre of our actions, given that poverty fuels extremism, which in turn feeds terrorist networks around the world. For Gabon, the fulfilment of our commitments to sustainable development remains linked to the ability of the international community to mobilize the necessary financing, establish innovative partnerships at the international level and promote the transfer of technologies, particularly to developing countries.

Gabon reiterates its determination to make every effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. We are resolutely committed to a process of reforms aimed at accelerating the diversification of our economy. It is a question of moving from an economy that is reliant on the exploitation of natural resources to a model of sustainable and diversified production that will enable a return to sustained economic growth, which will require, inter alia, the promotion of youth employment, gender equality and women's empowerment, and efforts to combat social inequalities. Those reforms, which are both structural and cyclical, are mainly based on the equal opportunities programme that was launched two years ago by the President of the Republic of Gabon, Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, and which consists mainly of moving from a system of undue privilege to one of equality in shared prosperity.

Making the United Nations an Organization at the service of peaceful societies also requires the international community to be more self-sacrificing in its fight against terrorism and other transnational threats, such as piracy and poaching. To that end, Gabon welcomes the convening of the international conference on combating the financing of Da'esh and Al-Qaida, held on 25 and 26 April in Paris. We hope that the findings of that conference will significantly contribute to strengthening the actions of the international coalition against terrorism.

We remain concerned that in many parts of Africa, extremist groups such as Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab, though weakened, continue to sow terror and desolation. We are similarly concerned for the Sahel region, where jihadists are now linked

to trafficking networks and where terrorist attacks continue to undermine the development efforts of the States in the region. Those facts clearly demonstrate the need to accelerate the strengthening of national, regional and subregional capacities so as to provide States with the means needed to ensure their effective security. With foreseeable and adequate funding from the international community, Africa will no doubt be more able to respond appropriately to the security threats that plague the continent. This is an opportunity for my delegation to call for the capacity-building of regional forces, such as the Group of Five for the Sahel and the African Union Mission in Somalia.

Similarly, it is important to strengthen our prevention strategies and mechanisms, including by addressing the root causes of crises. As the Assembly is aware, security measures are essential but not sufficient to completely eradicate the activities of terrorist groups. In that regard, strengthening international cooperation is essential. The Joint Summit of the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States, which was held on 30 July in Lomé and dealt with peace, security, stability and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, stemmed from the need to join our efforts to fight effectively against terrorism. The Summit enabled, among other things, a harmonization of the points of view of the regions of Central and West Africa and the adoption of a common approach in order to create the conditions for a secure environment in the common space of the two regions. My country remains resolutely committed to realizing the commitments made during the Summit, while continuing to implement the Central African strategy for combating terrorism and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

International peace and security have always been at the centre of Gabon's priorities. It is in that respect that Gabon recently decided to maintain its contingent in the Central African Republic within the framework of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. I am pleased to reaffirm my country's commitment to continue to fulfil its commitments in that regard and contribute to the efforts aimed at achieving lasting peace in that brotherly country, while stressing the need for a political solution based on the Libreville road map that was signed on 17 July 2017.

Despite the progress made, Central Africa is still beset with many security and humanitarian challenges. That is why, as part of our commitment to finding solutions to the various sources of instability throughout the subregion, President Ali Bongo Ondimba initiated a series of consultations with his peers, which resulted in the formal consultation of the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States on 2 July, on the margins of the thirty-first African Union Summit held in Nouakchott.

In reiterating its support for our Organization's efforts to strengthen peace and security in Africa, my country particularly commends the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy to reinvigorate the political process in Western Sahara. That political process is essential in more than one way; it is realistic and takes into account the specific features of the region, which is undermined by terrorist threats. Gabon would also like to recall that the initiative for autonomy proposed by Morocco is an ideal framework through which to reach a compromise solution that is acceptable to all parties. That initiative conforms with international law and the United Nations Charter and fits perfectly within the framework of the right to self-determination. The Security Council resolutions adopted since 2007 on that issue, including resolution 2414 (2018), have made clear the need to work towards a realistic, pragmatic and sustainable political solution based on compromise.

The world is increasingly exposed to the harmful effects of climate change. Given that alarming situation, our Organization must assert its leadership and ensure that the efforts made so far continue and are intensified. Climate change is a reality that impacts our daily lives. Rising temperatures, melting glaciers and polar ice caps and an increase in the number and magnitude of natural disasters are all undeniable signs of climate change.

The transformation of our consumption and production patterns and the immediate implementation of the commitments made in Paris are thus becoming an imperative for our universal conscience. In response to those facts, the President of the Gabonese Republic, in his capacity as coordinator of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change, has shown that he clearly understands the urgent need to act quickly, not only for Gabon but also for Africa.

It is in that context, that, in December 2017, Gabon provided substantial financial support to efforts to operationalize the Initiative for the Adaptation

of African Agriculture (AAA), launched in 2015 with the objective of helping African countries to plan, programme and implement climate-adaptation measures. At the same time, my country organized, in collaboration with the African Union and the United Nations Development Programme, a mobilization round table on 24 September at United Nations Headquarters for the AAA. In that regard, we reiterate our call to bilateral and multilateral partners, including the private sector, to support Africa's efforts to finance measures aimed at increasing the levels of adaptation and resilience to the effects of climate change.

On 10 and 11 December 2018, we will have to take a formal decision on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration during the Intergovernmental Conference to be held in Marrakech. The holistic approach that underpinned the negotiation process leading up the current text under the auspices of the United Nations coincides with a real hope that the world will reach a consensus that reflects the aspirations of present and future generations. Gabon, a land of hospitality, intends to participate in that important meeting, aware of the scale of the commitments to be made and the assumed responsibilities.

I would like to reiterate the crucial importance of multilateralism in responding to the challenges that we face and to the needs of the present world. Our success will be measured by the means that we provide ourselves with in order to bring the Organization closer to the peoples of the world. A stronger United Nations at the service of all — one that is based on shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable, and sustainable societies — is possible and within our reach.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Olof Skoog, Chair of the Delegation of Sweden.

**Mr. Skoog** (Sweden): Just a bit more than a week ago, we honoured the late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan in this Hall. It was a sad but dignified occasion. It was an inspiration as we began our journey at the current session of the General Assembly. We were reminded of the unique value of the United Nations and the responsibility that we, its Members, have towards the people of the world, namely, to promote peace, development and equal rights. And, as Kofi Annan once said, "We don't need any more promises. We need to start keeping the promises we have already made".

And, the time to act upon our joint commitments is indeed here. Sweden strives to act in accordance with its promises. We believe in international cooperation, in shared responsibility and participation, and in a rules-based order where international treaties and agreements are respected. When Sweden sought the Assembly's support to serve on the Security Council, we promised to act on several urgent priorities on behalf of all Members. We continue to do our utmost to keep those promises.

Let me give only a few examples. We have worked consistently to reverse the trend of disrespect for international humanitarian law and to ensure humanitarian access for all those in need, and we have insisted on diplomacy and political solutions to entrenched conflicts. We have urged members of the Security Council to shoulder their responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations, including resisting the use of the veto; we have always sought meaningful decisions and outcomes that make a difference for people on the ground.

We have tried to translate the Secretary-General's vision for improved prevention into practice. We have aimed at introducing an all-inclusive approach to peace, including by analysing new risks such as climate change and the risk of famine. We have focused on ensuring the care, safety and protection of children today, as that helps to prevent conflicts tomorrow. Platforms for the stronger influence of youth have been introduced. And not least, we have worked tirelessly and systematically to strengthen the role of women in order for us to better sustain and build peace.

We will continue to demand women's participation in peace processes, that women's voices be heard in negotiations and in the Security Council, that United Nations mission mandates include a women and peace and security perspective, that gender posts in missions continue to be funded and that gender aspects besystematically included in mission reporting and monitoring. We have also worked to ensure that the voices of civil society are heard at the Council table and have worked to deepen the partnership with regional organizations. However, in too many instances, the Security Council, as a collective, has failed to deliver on promises to the people whom we are meant to serve.

In Syria and Yemen, where two of the worst humanitarian disasters of our time are unfolding, humanitarian access is being continuously denied and

international humanitarian law blatantly disregarded. In Syria, a political solution to the conflict is long overdue. Horrendous crimes are being committed against the civilian population. We must work tirelessly to bring those responsible to justice, however long it may take. In Yemen, we have yet to see a full commitment by all parties to what the Security Council has clearly stated, namely, that there can be no military solution. Instead of committing to a political process, we see an escalation of the conflict and a deterioration in an already horrific humanitarian situation.

The suffering of the stateless Rohingya population of Myanmar continues. The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar recently presented solid evidence of the gravity of the atrocities committed by the Myanmar military, amounting to the worst crimes under international law. Since Myanmar has systematically failed to investigate, prosecute and condemn perpetrators, the international community must shoulder its responsibility and act to end impunity. The Rohingyas should be able to return voluntarily and in safety; the Kofi Annan plan must be implemented and a credible peace processes for the outstanding conflicts must be pursued.

A Middle East peace process remains elusive, and instead, a rapid negative development is unfolding that includes continued disregard for international humanitarian law. Seventy years after the 1947 resolution on the United Nations partition plan for Palestine (resolution 181 (II)), and in spite of calls for United Nations resolutions to be respected, the fulfilment of the promise of a two-State solution — with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security, and with Jerusalem as the capital of both States — seems very far away.

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and the aggression in eastern Ukraine constitute violations of international law. To date, that aggression has caused more than 10,000 deaths and unacceptable human suffering. The commitments made in the Helsinki Final Act and the Budapest Memorandum must be honoured and the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements assured. In the absence of political solutions and in the face of ongoing conflicts, humanitarian efforts must be strengthened and protected.

We pay tribute to the courageous and selfless efforts of all humanitarian workers worldwide. Sweden has continued to deliver on our commitment to support strong, effective and principled humanitarian action worldwide. We have increased our financial contributions to the United Nations-led global humanitarian response system and improved the effectiveness of our common efforts through our engagement in the Grand Bargain process. We have also enhanced the way in which we link our humanitarian assistance with longer-term development assistance.

Let us not forget that there are also positive dynamics, reminding us to keep up hope and never to give up the quest for peace, including in the most difficult circumstances and entrenched conflicts. In the Horn of Africa there is positive change — a testament to what a difference courageous leaders and people can make. Let us encourage and recognize that historic development, support its fulfilment and allow it to serve as an inspiration to us all. On the Korean peninsula, there is also hope that a political solution will emerge from years of escalation, high tension and mistrust. There is unity in the Security Council as we move towards our common goal of complete denuclearization, peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula through diplomatic means.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also brings hope. The commitments that we have collectively made have put an enormous responsibility upon us all. We need the United Nations to assist us. The reforms initiated by the Secretary-General to make the United Nations more fit for purpose are creating better conditions for us to move from promises to action. Sweden lives up to our promise to annually provide 1 per cent of our gross domestic income to official development assistance. More than 50 per cent of that is channelled to or through the multilateral system. That reflects our belief in multilateralism and the 2030 Agenda as part of our central plan for our common future. It will require a multilateral system that is cost-effective, coherent, accountable, agile and that delivers results for people.

The funding compact between the United Nations and its Member States provides a unique opportunity. We, the Member States, need to improve the quality of our funding to the United Nations. This year, Sweden has already taken steps to that end by signing multi-year agreements of core support for UN-Women, the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the Central Emergency Response Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Relief

and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the World Food Programme. Core funding is crucial for the independent delivery and efficiency of the development system.

Another global promise was made in Paris, when we all agreed to seriously and urgently address climate change. The gap between current commitments and the required emissions reductions under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is alarmingly large. The European Union has made important progress towards reaching the targets, but we must all do more. Sweden has adopted a climate-policy framework that establishes that Sweden will have net zero emissions in 2045. We have also taken a leading role in climate finance, and we remain firmly committed to mobilizing our share of the $100 billion annually by 2020.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court — a milestone for accountability. Political will and cooperation remain crucial for the Court in its efforts to carry out its mandate. We will continue to honour our promise to support the Court and its independence and impartiality. Sweden will also continue to stand up for the protection and promotion of human rights. There can be no development without security, and no security without development, and we will not enjoy either of them without universal respect for human rights. Global forced migration remains a challenge to many countries, and more cooperation is needed to share the responsibility for the world's refugees. At the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants on 19 September 2016, it was decided to work out two global frameworks — one on refugees and one on migration. They will increase the cooperation, accountability and structure needed to better manage the increasing refugee and migratory flows that we see today.

In his comprehensive and timely agenda for disarmament, the Secretary-General clearly articulated the fact that measures for arms control and disarmament play a critical role in the prevention of armed conflict. Ground-breaking international commitments have been reached. At the same time, the field of disarmament remains filled with broken and unfulfilled promises. We are witnessing a deeply worrisome nuclear renaissance, with vast modernizations of nuclear arsenals underway. Nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States should heed the call of the Secretary-General to engage in a dialogue and in confidence-building aimed at reducing risks and at breaking the stalemate plaguing disarmament diplomacy. The framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is ideally suited for such efforts.

How can we work towards fulfilling our promises to the 50 per cent of the world's population who are women and girls? Sweden has focused on promoting equal access to rights, representation and resources. Women's voices cannot be ignored anymore; women must be included everywhere, all the time and at all levels. Global normative frameworks and international commitments on gender equality and human rights are increasingly under attack, especially sexual and reproductive health and rights. More needs to be done to combat sexual harassment and sexual violence everywhere, in workplaces and in society at large. That pertains also to the United Nations system. The United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as on sexual harassment and assault, must urgently be turned into practice. We welcome the Secretary-General's Strategy on Gender Parity, which has made gender balance the new standard.

We are about to close the high-level segment of the General Assembly. In the very first intervention last week, the Secretary-General outlined the challenges to our world: a deficit of trust and the need to show the added value of international cooperation by delivering on the promise of peace, defending human rights and driving economic and social progress for women and men everywhere. International cooperation with a well-functioning multilateralism at its core are the best tools we have. So let us be the generation that acted on our promises — not just as independent States, but as the United Nations.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Marc-André Blanchard, Chair of the Delegation of Canada.

**Mr. Blanchard** (Canada): Canada is honoured to help close the general debate at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. Let me start with a simple question. Why does the United Nations matter? The answer is also simple. The magnitude of the contemporary challenges that the world is confronting, from climate change to terrorism, from economic inequality to irregular migration, from protracted crises to humanitarian emergencies, demands action. Each of those challenges is systemic. None can be solved by countries acting in isolation or bilaterally. All of them

require the world to work together. The United Nations is the only place where we all come together to tackle those challenges. Indeed, the General Assembly — our Assembly — is the only forum where representation is global. That representation not only bestows legitimacy, it affords opportunities to harness diversity of thought and experience, skills and knowledge, and ideas, in support of better outcomes for all.

Since the beginning of the post-war project, Canada has been at the heart of the United Nations. We were among the drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We were there at the advent of peacekeeping. We helped to build the institutions at the core of the rules-based international order. But those rules and institutions were not, and should not be, seen as static entities, impervious to change. Notwithstanding their tremendous achievements, we should acknowledge that the benefits of those rules and institutions have not been evenly distributed. Too many remain excluded, economically, socially and politically, from the decision-making that affects their lives.

The great generation that came out of the ashes of the Second World War was great not because times were simpler, or the challenges less complex. They were great because they found a way to work together, in common cause for collective outcomes. Their work helped to ensure stability and relative peace and security for over 70 years. We owe it to them, and to ourselves, to continue to work together to make our multilateral world order more efficient, fairer and more inclusive. That is why supporting the implementation of the current United Nations reforms, led by our Secretary-General, António Guterres, is so essential.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a phenomenal achievement of the United Nations. For the first time in history, we agreed on a comprehensive strategic plan to achieve a sustainable world. The plan brings us into uncharted territory. Sticking to old approaches will not help us meet its targets.

We should find new ways of doing things and for breaking silos open, not only here at the United Nations but also between Governments and civil society, between Governments and the private sector, between North and South and between the traditional so-called like-minded and non-traditional like-minded. We should do things differently at the United Nations and in our Governments so as to better deliver results for people on the ground. We should hold fresh, frank and inclusive discussions. We should develop a greater sense of urgency. We should reconsider our approach to risk — inaction is a risk for Governments and people, but also for investors. We should identify the opportunities in our challenges. We should look at new partnerships to harness new opportunities.

As our Secretary-General says, climate change is the defining issue of our time. A significant component of the response to climate change requires new, greener and more resilient infrastructure. That represents a $26 trillion opportunity for us all. To harness that opportunity, starting with the most vulnerable — the small island States — we must all work together with scientists, multilateral institutions, regional banks, investors and civil society like never before.

Not building essential infrastructure is not an option. As Prime Minister Trudeau and others have said, developing countries should not be punished for a problem they did not create, nor should they be deprived the opportunities for clean growth that developed nations are now pursuing. And we should all support Africa as it works to create opportunities for its youth and strives to meet the ambitions of its Agenda 2063 of the African Union through greater economic integration and prosperity. Doing so is key to a more secure world. Greater and more shared prosperity leads to greater peace.

(*spoke in French*)

Bringing people together is at the heart of Canada's national identity. In Canada, we have come to understand that diversity is our strength. The indigenous peoples in Canada are the bedrock of our diversity. They speak more than 60 different languages, and their cultures are some of the richest on the continent. One in every five Canadians was born outside the country. Our largest urban centres are among the most cosmopolitan on earth. Over 50 per cent of the populations of both Vancouver and Toronto were born outside Canada.

Canada has become home to refugees and new Canadians for decades. While we are very proud to have welcomed more than 50,000 Syrian refugees over the past three years, we are fully aware that many countries have also shown great leadership in welcoming many more. I must say that one of the things that makes me very proud is that 40 per cent of the Syrian refugees that we have welcomed have been directly sponsored by private citizens of Canada, who wanted to do their part.

Of course, our track record in promoting economic and social integration will always require work and action. While we have made important progress, we have made mistakes and still face challenges — the most important of which remains reconciliation with First Nations. We in Canada understand that we need to listen and learn in order to contribute to better outcomes. It is what we intend to do, both at home and abroad.

(*spoke in English*)

We are using our Group of 7 (G-7) presidency this year both to listen and learn from others, in addition to innovating and breaking down silos. For the first time, in order to ensure that Governments were delivering in a more cohesive manner, Canada convened ministers of finance and ministers of international development together to explore new ways of financing development. We can no longer afford to have discussions at the United Nations that are distinct from those at the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund.

We also felt very strongly that the G-7 needed to tackle the issue of climate resilience and disaster recovery. While Canada has its own extensive coast ines and borders on three oceans, we invited small island, coastal African and South-East Asian States to that critical conversation. Building on the United Nations Ocean Conference, that discussion produced a charter seeking to ban the use of plastics in our oceans and is paving the way towards the sustainable blue economy conference in November in Nairobi that Canada is so proud to be co-hosting with Kenya.

We partnered with the World Bank and other countries to raise close to $3.8 billion to reduce the barriers that women and girls face in accessing education in conflict and fragile States. Their inclusion will lead to exceptional benefits for their communities, and by extension, for the world. Last week, here at the United Nations, another $527 million were pledged by four other countries. We also need capital that flows faster and at scale in emerging and frontier markets. For that reason, we are also working together with partners from across the United Nations and the private sector to unlock capital that can connect people to opportunities.

As a direct result of the work that we do here at the United Nations, just a few days ago at the high-level meeting on financing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Prime Minister Trudeau announced the establishment of a Toronto affiliate of the Global Infrastructure Hub to do precisely that: leverage Canadian expertise in infrastructure to help connect capital to projects. Those projects fuel long-term economic growth and support the transition to a low-carbon economy, while making progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and improving the representation of women and marginalized groups in sustainable infrastructure.

Our commitment to multilateralism — notably United Nations peacekeeping — includes a commitment to renewal and reform and to making the system that our grandparents built fit for purpose in the twenty-first century. Canada is proud to have increased its contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations and to have adopted smart pledging — sending the people and equipment that are most needed to the places where they are most useful.

Canada is spearheading the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations — a practical plan to act on our shared promise to double the number of women in peacekeeping operations. We set that as a goal, first and foremost, because of our shared belief in the fundamental equal rights of women. We also know that having women in the ranks — and in charge — makes peacekeeping more effective and its results more durable. We look forward to working with our new partners, Ghana and Zambia, to better recruit, train, retain and promote women across all of our police and military forces. For the international rules-based order to work for all, the rules need to apply to all. Accountability cannot be a luxury afforded only when circumstances allow.

As is the case everywhere, Canada's actions in Myanmar, Syria, Ukraine and Venezuela are guided by an unequivocal commitment to protecting and promoting human rights. The crimes against humanity committed against the Rohingya of Myanmar, including the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war, are utterly unacceptable. Canada's Parliament unanimously adopted a motion naming those crimes genocide and urging the Security Council to refer those appalling acts to the International Criminal Court. The plight of the Rohingya people demands a response.

Canada is appalled by the crimes that the Al-Assad regime in Syria has committed against its own people, including, most horrifically, the use of banned chemical weapons. Syrians rightly demand accountability and hope for an enduring political solution. The

White Helmets, many of whom gathered evidence of chemical-weapon attacks at the risk of their lives, rightly expect our support in seeking justice.

In Canada's own hemisphere, an Organization of American States panel of independent international experts carefully documented many of the crimes being committed in Venezuela by the Maduro regime against its own people. Here too, Venezuelans hope for accountability. For that reason, we and our regional partners took the exceptional step of referring that case to the International Criminal Court.

(*spoke in French*)

The ongoing illegal annexation and occupation of Crimea is a clear breach of international law. Respect for State sovereignty and territorial integrity are not mere notions; they are the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We must not allow Russia to continue its destabilizing actions.

Our determination to ensure that the perpetrators of those serious crimes in Myanmar, Syria, Ukraine and Venezuela are held accountable is accompanied by a deep commitment to improve the humanitarian situation for the millions of people affected, both within those countries, as well as across those regions.

We recognize that the disproportionate share of the responsibility for providing lifesaving support to so many people has fallen on neighbouring countries, and we assure them that they can continue to rely on our assistance. We will continue to contribute to the work of the United Nations in addressing those challenges.

(*spoke in English*)

When the international rules-based order was designed, the General Assembly mandated the Security Council to authorize the use of force, if necessary, to keep the peace and to keep us safe. Seventy years later, that remains its core responsibility. The Security Council's agenda is replete with persistent and emerging challenges. Some security threats we know all too well; others are emerging; and others still we have yet to anticipate. But all are systemic and require collective responses. Be they old or new, those threats will continue to test the Security Council's ability to adapt and respond. That is why Canada is seeking a non-permanent seat on the Security Council in 2021-2022. We are confident that we can contribute to effective, carefully considered global responses.

We have a proven record of working with other Member States to bring fresh ideas and innovative approaches to the tackling of complex problems, from peacekeeping and policing to peacebuilding and transitions. We are confident that we can harness the diversity of ideas and experience necessary to fashion forward-looking approaches that can work. After all, bringing people together is our calling card. A capacity for cooperation defines our national character. Inclusion is part of our identity. When Canada has served on the Security Council in the past, we have done so inclusively. We brought other States and civil society into the conversation. We championed the women and peace and security agenda and human security. We fought for the protection of civilians caught in the crossfire of armed conflict.

If elected to the Security Council, we will bring to bear our long-standing dedication to peacekeeping, our more than 30 years of service as Chair of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, and our active membership in the Peacebuilding Commission. If elected, we will work with others to tackle climate change and violent extremism, and to promote economic security and the empowerment of women and girls. We will champion inclusion and accountability, openness and transparency in all of the Security Council's deliberations. We will help to find solutions so as to build a safer, fairer, and more secure world where the benefits of the international rules-based order are distributed more evenly. We are confident that the institutions that we have spent more than seven decades building can be renewed and revitalized. But we can do that effectively only if we do it together.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jean-Claude Félix do Rego, Chair of the Delegation of the Republic of Benin.

**Mr. Do Rego** (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to deliver the following statement on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Patrice Talon, President of the Republic of Benin, who had to leave New York because of other commitments.

> "On behalf of the delegation of Benin and on my own behalf, I would like to reiterate my warmest congratulations to the President on her well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. We assure her of Benin's full support.

"I would also like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, her predecessor, on the quality of the work accomplished during his mandate. I should also like to greet and express my support to Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General, and to once again wish him every success.

"I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the holding here on Monday, 24 September, of the high-level plenary meeting devoted to the theme of world peace in honour of the centenary of the birth of Nelson Mandela (see A/73/PV.5). Indeed, Nelson Mandela embodies the core values on which the United Nations is built. The fight against all forms of discrimination and the defence of the fundamental rights of all, the sanctity of diversity recognized as a rich resource, tolerance, forgiveness and reconciliation, and the fight for the recognition of the dignity of all were all key aspects of his commitment to social justice, freedom and peace in South Africa. Africa will always have a debt of immense gratitude to that great humanist, whose name will forever be engraved in the hearts and minds of Africans of all generations. It has indeed given shape to the dream of an Africa that stands on its feet, fully itself, bringing its discourse and experience to the development and humanization of our planet.

"Besides Nelson Mandela, I would also like to pay tribute to another great African, the late Kofi Annan, the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations, whose charisma and leadership enabled our Organization to make great strides. His tireless commitment to world peace renders him equally worthy of our gratitude.

"The year 2018 has been particularly trying for several countries. In that respect, I would like to reiterate my condolences and to express my sympathy to the Governments and the peoples of the Americas, France, Indonesia, Madagascar, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Germany and Australia, as well as to all the island countries that fell victim to natural disasters this year.

"Faced with an increasingly turbulent world, beset by crises and difficulties of all kinds, countries have a duty to act in a concerted manner and with strong determination. That is why I welcome the theme of this session, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies." From my country's point of view, that theme impels nations to confront their responsibilities and urges them to work together in a multilateral framework to find appropriate and sustainable solutions to contemporary challenges.

"Benin continues to believe that international relations should be based primarily on increasingly close cooperation among States, as well as on the harmonious functioning of international organizations. One major function of such organizations is to ensure the protection of common interests and collective security. To question multilateralism would therefore be a fatal error in a world that will henceforth forever be interconnected.

"Benin also welcomes the conclusion of the negotiations on a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration here at the United Nations in July, and we look forward to the definitive adoption of the compact in December in Marrakech, Morocco. It should be underscored that that process demonstrates, once again, the power of multilateralism and our ability to compromise on difficult issues that go beyond the narrow confines of our respective national sovereignties.

"The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its implementation represent an important step in promoting the development of States and the livelihoods of peoples. Accelerating its implementation is a major imperative for the Government of Benin, which is working to find innovative mechanisms to enable it to have access to resources that will ensure financing for the implementation. Those resources, which exist in sufficient quantities on the market but remain difficult to access, will supplement funding and assistance from development partners.

"I would like, however, to emphasize that, from my Government's point of view, improving governance is a prerequisite for achieving the objectives of our Revealing Benin programme and the Sustainable Development Goals. This is why the fight against impunity and corruption is at the heart of my Government's actions and the work undertaken by all our national institutions. In the course of this year, our legislative arsenal has been strengthened, and a special court has been created

and made operational to crack down on economic crime and terrorism.

"Those measures are necessary in order to ensure that mobilized financial resources serve their intended purposes. They also aim to make national stakeholders more honest and to ensure the quality of public spending. My Government's ambition is to ensure that all citizens have access to drinking water, primary health care and education, and can be ensured a decent life. Realizing that legitimate ambition justifies the establishment of a vast rural water supply project and an insurance initiative for reinforcing human capital, which seek to provide social security to all, particularly to those who are most disadvantaged.

"The Government of Benin is also implementing measures to ensure better health care for the entire population. They include guaranteeing the quality of drugs sold for therapeutic purposes, which is a major public-health requirement. Benin has begun a relentless fight against counterfeit and poor-quality medicines circulating in its territory. In order to overcome that scourge of clearly transnational dimensions, it is important that the international community mobilize itself within the framework of a global partnership against impunity and indifference in order to ensure equality of access to high-quality medicines for rich and poor alike.

"Furthermore, Benin is committed to a tourism development policy, which can produce rapid growth with a high social impact. Given its rich culture and historic legacy, Benin has begun developing flagship projects in the field of tourism, combining our heritage, culture, modernity and openness to the world. In order to create the conditions enabling tourism to become one of the drivers of our economic growth and socioeconomic development, Benin is in the process of building three museums equipped with the most modern means of conservation and exhibition to reveal, in a new spirit, its contribution and role in the evolution of humankind to the world.

"With the restitution of our cultural property, Benin wishes to reclaim the epic of its kings and elite female warrior corps or Amazons and the remains of the largest West African port in the history of slavery — as well as the wealth of arts and culture of its voodoo heritage — and tell it to the world. Many of the works that bear witness to our rich past are currently being held abroad in public and private collections. In that context, their restitution takes on a restorative and economic dimension. That is why, since 2016, Benin has been strongly committed to achieving the restitution of cultural property to their countries of origin. In that long-term, legitimate struggle, strong action in terms of international cooperation is required. Benin therefore welcomes the positive reaction on the part of the authorities of the French Republic to its restitution demands.

"However, the question goes far beyond Franco-Beninese relations. A number of other countries face the same problems. Nevertheless, it is possible to note that those issues — beyond their historical, sociological or philosophical dimensions — are not well covered in international law. Benin would like to invite the United Nations to consider, in a positive and cooperative manner, the possibility of adopting a binding international instrument on that issue.

"The preservation of international peace and security represents a major and constant strategic axis of Benin's foreign policy. My country considers peacekeeping operations to be one of the most important tools that the United Nations has at its disposal to achieve peace and security. That is why, despite our limited capacity and means, my country has been associated with international initiatives to prevent crises and maintain peace for decades. My delegation therefore welcomes the recent adoption by the General Assembly of the proposed restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar. We also strongly support the actions initiated by the Secretary-General to increase the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations through the definition of more precise mandates by the Security Council and the establishment of stronger partnerships with regional and subregional organizations.

"Benin welcomes and strongly supports the United Nations zero-tolerance policy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse in the context of peacekeeping operations. As a troop-contributing country, Benin is committed to fully playing our role in that regard. My delegation remains concerned, however, about the steady decline in resources allocated to peacekeeping. The principle

of doing more with less is not appropriate there, given the increasing complexity of the threats faced by peacekeepers today on the ground.

"In addition, my delegation regrets the lack of progress on the issue of Security Council reform. We reaffirm our support for the Ezulwini Consensus, which calls for the allocation of two permanent Security Council seats to Africa, including the right to veto. We are convinced that the equitable representation of Member States in the Security Council would lead to the more inclusive and effective management of major contemporary political issues.

"Benin, having just adopted a law on radiation protection, wishes to commend the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency to establish a universal plan for the use of nuclear energy for strictly civilian purposes and reiterates its support for measures aimed at establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

"I cannot conclude my statement without reaffirming Benin's support for the United Nations efforts to create a viable Palestinian State with the attributes of full international sovereignty, living side-by-side and in perfect harmony with the State of Israel.

"Long live the United Nations in the service of peace, security, the promotion of human rights, democracy and sustainable development!"

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Maria Helena Lopes De Jesus Pires, Chair of the Delegation of Timor-Leste.

**Mrs. Lopes De Jesus Pires** (Timor-Leste) (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I have the honour to address the General Assembly at its seventy-third session on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Dionísio da Costa Babo Soares, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste.

First of all, allow me to join our voices to those of previous speakers and present, on behalf of Timor-Leste, our deepest condolences to the people of Indonesia, particularly to the families of the victims of the earthquake and tsunami in Palu, Sulawesi.

I would like to start by congratulating Her Excellency Mrs. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session and also wish her success in this session under the theme: "Making the United Nations relevant for all people: global leadership and shared responsibility for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". Taking into account the fact that this is only the fourth time in the history of the Organization that a woman is leading this important body, I believe that the President will also serve as an important role model for women and girls worldwide. I would like to assure her of Timor-Leste's support.

I would also like to extend our gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for all his work towards achieving sustaining peace and preventing conflict. Timor-Leste also commends the manner in which the election of the seventy-third President of the General Assembly took place under the leadership of President Lajčák, which provided an excellent precedent for future elections. We appreciate the theme chosen for this session and believe that it is most appropriate. The theme draws our attention to the need to unite peoples at a time when we are witnessing a gradual but unquestionable breakdown in the world order, which is leading to even more inequality and insecurity and further undermining faith in national and international institutions.

At a time when solidarity among peoples has assumed extreme importance in the global agenda, feelings of helplessness and impotence are evident, which divides peoples and provokes hostility. That is why the theme of this session is so important and appropriate because of its focus on inclusiveness, equality and global leadership. Timor-Leste is undoubtedly the leading example of the importance of an order based on international law. Next year, our country will celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the popular consultation organized by the United Nations, in which our people voted courageously for independence.

We cannot forget or fail to pay tribute to the then Secretary-General, our dear friend the late Kofi Annan. It was with deep sorrow and sadness that our people received the news of his death. As Secretary-General, Kofi Annan played a leading role in conducting the negotiations between Portugal and Indonesia, which culminated in the signing of the agreement of 5 May 1999, giving rise to the popular consultation in Timor-Leste. That is a significant milestone that we will also be commemorating next year.

Recently, the United Nations again played a major role in Timor-Leste's future. For the first time, a Conciliation Commission, established in 2016 under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, succeeded in the positive resolution of a long-standing dispute between Timor-Leste and Australia about the definition of our maritime boundaries. That was a process that took about a year and a half and culminated in a new maritime boundary treaty, signed in this Hall on 6 March of this year, in the presence of Secretary-General António Guterres. The new treaty has enabled us to consolidate our national sovereignty and establish an important model for the peaceful resolution of international disputes. In a time of increasing global geopolitical tensions over maritime disputes, the success of the first conciliation process in history assumes an unprecedented international significance. Timor-Leste encourages other Member States to consider that mechanism for the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes. We believe that the mechanism will play an important role in appeasing global tensions on our seas.

Our world faces many challenges, which can be effectively resolved through dialogue, cooperation and on the basis of international law. One of the main challenges of our times is, without a doubt, climate change. That is an issue that Secretary-General António Guterres has identified as the defining issue of our time. Timor-Leste is confident that the international community will act as one in responding to that existential threat to our planet.

I take this opportunity to highlight the importance of active and extensive cooperation aimed at pursuing urgent and real action to deal with the threat facing small island developing States, including those in the Pacific region, which are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

I also would like to emphasize a fundamental issue that also requires the attention of the entire international community, namely, global migration. Conflicts, wars, situations of inequality and climate change have resulted in an intense migratory movement throughout the world.

Timor-Leste and the g7+ countries know that sustainable development cannot be achieved without peace. That is why we are aware of the fact that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals will be unattainable if we are not able to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies. We hope that the assessment of the 2030 Agenda will take into consideration those concerns so that the fragile and vulnerable countries will not be left behind.

Timor-Leste welcomes the reforms of the United Nations system under the leadership of Secretary-General António Guterres. Following the implementation of the plan to enhance the role of the United Nations resident coordinators, Timor-Leste will contribute a modest amount over the next five years. We also support, without reservations, the reforms under the peace and security pillar. We commend the Secretary-General for his initiative on Action for Peace, including the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, which Timor-Leste has signed. In order to contribute to peace operations, Timor-Leste is currently investing in the training of its police and military personnel — with a special focus on strengthening the representation of women — in order to increase its capacity and possibilities for contributing in the near future to United Nations peace missions.

However, despite our shared efforts aimed at strengthening peacekeeping missions, we continue to see conflicts and war in the world, which fills us with concern. The ongoing war in Syria is a tragedy that is causing irreparable human damage and terrible suffering for the people living in that region. Timor-Leste urges the international community to do everything possible to put an end to that war and to stop the death and destruction in that country. The people of Western Sahara are still being denied their right to self-determination. We welcome the appointment of Mr. Horst Köhler as Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara. We also appeal to the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro to establish a serious dialogue aimed at reaching a mutually beneficial political solution that will enable the people of Western Sahara to exercise their right to self-determination through a referendum organized by the United Nations.

Timor-Leste urges the international community to redouble its efforts with the parties concerned aimed at reaching a just, peaceful and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. We reaffirm Timor-Leste's support for the two-State solution and the urgent protection of the civilian population. Timor-Leste also remains concerned about the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba for more than

six decades, which has had a considerable impact on the lives of the people and the development of the country. Our region welcomes the continued dialogue for peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula, and we hope that the dialogue between the parties concerned will bring an end to the proliferation of nuclear weapons in our region.

*The President took the Chair.*

Allow me to take the opportunity to talk about the current situation in Timor-Leste. On 12 May, we held early legislative elections. The elections were held in a peaceful environment and resulted in a new Government led by His Excellency Mr. Taur Matan Ruak. After a period of economic stagnation owing to the political situation, my country is resuming its development and economic growth and is on the path towards normalcy. The socioeconomic foundations that we need in order to create a prosperous and united society have already been established. With the recent adoption of the general Government budget, we hope to continue to improve our social, communications and housing infrastructure and, in turn, develop opportunities for investment and economic development.

Another important step for Timor-Leste was the Government's decision to acquire 30 per cent of the capital in the consortium that operates the Greater Sunrise gas field in the Timor Sea, which gives us the possibility of connecting a pipeline to Timorese territory and accelerating the development of the southern coast. It was, once again, our historic leader and former President of the Republic and Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr. Xanana Gusmão, who successfully conducted the negotiations.

We continue to have strong relations with our neighbours Indonesia and Australia. We are also deepening our cooperation with the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and we await patiently a decision on our request to accede to that organization. Timor-Leste remains committed to strengthening ties of friendship and cooperation with the countries of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and hopes that the Portuguese language, spoken by nearly 250 million people worldwide, will also become an official language of the United Nations.

Our country has also signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and we encourage all Member States to do so. We live in a world that is different from that of the immediate post-Second World War period, when the United Nations was created. The current times are full of challenges, and we all need, more than ever, to be prepared to meet those challenges and our aspirations, as well as to defend the value of multilateralism. My country firmly believes in the United Nations and in the international system. As such, we are committed to working cooperatively towards international peace, security and prosperity for the well-being of humankind.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ali Naseer Mohamed, Chair of the Delegation of the Republic of Maldives.

**Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives): I wish to convey my delegation's congratulations to you, Madam President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Your election to preside over the Assembly represents the progress we are making towards gender equality, a momentum that we need to enhance at the global level. Yet the fact that you are only the fourth woman to do so shows how far we still have to go. I also wish to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his leadership in steering the Organization during these challenging times. The theme that you have chosen for the session, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable, and sustainable societies", is most appropriate.

Now more than ever before, we need the international community to work together to build resilient societies in order to ensure that everyone has a fair share of the benefits of development. In order to achieve that, we need the United Nations to assume greater leadership in unifying our collective efforts. The focus should be on building communities that can withstand shocks and bounce back stronger. Recognizing that, the cornerstone of the development strategy of the Maldives is to build resilience: economic resilience, institutional resilience, environmental resilience and, indeed, political resilience.

The Maldives is an old nation, but a young democracy. In our journey towards the consolidation of our democracy, 23 September of this year was an extraordinary day. On that day, the Maldives held its third multi-party presidential election. The election took place peacefully and seamlessly, with a voter turnout of 89 per cent. It was a moment that made every Maldivian proud of how far we have come and the accelerated progress that the country has achieved. Following the

election, the Maldives is now going through the process of the transfer of power from one elected Government to the other.

The accelerated pace of democratization in the Maldives is moving in tandem with an even faster growth in social and economic development. From its humble beginning as one of the poorest countries in the world at its independence in 1965 to its status today as an upper middle-income country, the Maldives is a success story by any measure. The Maldives has one of the highest human development indicators in our region, with nearly universal literacy rates, universal immunization and the lowest infant mortality and maternal mortality rates. The country has eradicated diseases such as polio, measles, malaria and lymphatic filariasis, although various types of non-communicable diseases are emerging as new challenges.

The progress in the social sector can be sustained and expanded only through strong economic growth. The outgoing President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, in his five years in office, focused on developing and modernizing critical infrastructure in order to stimulate growth in the country's main industries. The newly expanded runway at our main international airport and the ongoing expansion of the airport terminal will significantly boost the tourism industry and create jobs and increasing wealth. Just a few weeks ago we opened a bridge that connects our capital city, Malé, with the main international airport and a reclaimed suburb of the capital, Hulhumalé. That has transformed the physical landscape of the capital by consolidating three separate populations, thus helping to achieve economies of scale and better adaptation to climate change.

At the same time, we cannot create islands of progress and prosperity without partnering with our friends through the kind of partnerships that are mutually beneficial, based on mutual trust and that are envisaged in various international agendas and agreements, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Samoa Pathway and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The national developmental efforts of small islands developing States, such as the Maldives, need support in the form of capacity-building, transfer of technology, and access to finance in order to achieve the goals set out in international development agendas.

The United Nations can assume a greater level of leadership in fostering such support. In order to be able to do that, the Secretariat also needs the support of the Assembly, so that it can assist countries in special situations, such as small island developing States, with a more balanced allocation of resources. The United Nations is the engine room of multilateralism, and the existence of small States, especially the small island developing States, depends on multilateral norms. And yet, the principles of international law that govern friendly relations and cooperation among States are being challenged at a fundamental level. There is, therefore, a need for countries, big and small, to return to the right side of the law.

The State of Palestine is one place where the occupying Power challenges international law and norms on a daily basis with a sense of impunity. Today, we once again join many other countries in calling for a permanent end to the unlawful occupation of Palestinian lands and for allowing the Palestinian people the possibility of exercising their legitimate right to self-determination. The Maldives firmly believes that lasting peace can be achieved only with a two-State solution in which the State of Palestine achieves its sovereignty within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Unilateral measures that go against the grain of that internationally accepted arrangement are regressive and illegal.

The Maldives also calls for a peaceful end to the continuing war in Syria. The humanitarian situation continues to worsen. The Security Council has not adequately addressed that conflict and its consequences. We must take more assertive action to stop the tide of suffering in Syria. Humanitarian intervention is a necessity. A permanent political solution is a must.

Similarly, the atrocities that are being committed against Muslims in Myanmar should not be ignored. The Maldives calls on the authorities in Myanmar to bring to justice the perpetrators who have committed genocidal crimes against the Rohingya Muslims. In particular, the recommendations of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar should be implemented without delay.

Article 1 of the Charter describes the United Nations as the centre for harmonizing the actions of nations. The United Nations can meaningfully fulfil that function only if it is fit for the purposes set out in clear terms in the Charter. The reforms that the

Secretary-General introduced in recent months to modernize the development system of the United Nations have begun to take shape. Yet our attempts to bring broader systemic reform to the Organization, such as the reform of the Security Council, have produced many processes but virtually no success, despite more than four decades of deliberations. The United Nations needs to be an institution where every Member State should feel welcomed, where the combined power of many ideas, many solutions and many voices can thrive in addressing the challenges of climate change, ocean degradation, poverty, exclusion and discrimination.

For small island developing States, such as the Maldives, the United Nations will always remain the indispensable partner in building our national resilience. We see the United Nations as the key in determining our place and our voice in global discourse. Ensuring the relevance of the United Nations must mean ensuring that everyone, from the biggest to the smallest, plays their part. It must mean offering everyone a place in finding shared solutions for our shared future. It must mean sharing the responsibility to deliver a more peaceful, a more just, equitable and sustainable future for our children and their children.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Before giving the floor to speakers in exercise of the right of reply, may I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Golroo** (Islamic Republic of Iran) (*spoke in Arabic*): A few days ago, the Saudi Minister for Foreign Affairs took the floor in this Hall to level false allegations against my country (see A/73/PV.13). I am therefore speaking in Arabic today in order to respond directly to his allegations and ensure that our position is made clear to that neighbouring country.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia stated that his country supports the American strategy against Iran. Such a position is neither new nor astonishing. Saudi positions are well known. They oppose the peoples and the Governments of the region, particularly those of Arab nations. What is odd is that the Saudi Minister should accuse my country of supporting terrorism. That is very strange. Everybody knows that Saudi Arabia provides more than ample support to terrorism. I do not wish to defend the position of my country, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as far as counter-terrorism measures are concerned. It is already well known, particularly among the peoples and the Governments of friendly States in the region.

However, allow me to simply recall here the institutional links that exist between Saudi Arabia and terrorism, based on Western perspectives. In leaked diplomatic cables sent by Hillary Clinton, the former United States Secretary of State, she said in 2009 that Saudi donors were the greatest source of funding for terrorist groups around the world. A British report was also issued by the Henry Jackson Society on foreign money transfers to support extremism, underscoring the fact that Saudi Arabia is the largest financer of extremism in Britain. The British media disclosed a United Kingdom Government investigation that was ordered by former Prime Minister David Cameron to investigate allegations about Saudi Arabia's supporting terrorist and extremist groups in Britain.

Many former European ambassadors in Riyadh have also accused Saudi Arabia of such measures. A former European ambassador to Saudi Arabia even described Saudi Arabia as the kingdom of terrorism and accused that country of using its oil wealth to spread terrorism around the globe. The most prominent party accusing Saudi Arabia of financing terrorism is the United States Congress, which, on 28 September 2016, adopted, by an overwhelming majority, the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act aimed at Saudi Arabia, because 16 Saudi nationals were identified as having been involved in the 11 September 2001 attacks.

Let me stop at this point to say that everyone knows that the source of the terrorism aimed at innocent people in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and New York on 11 September 2001 is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Everybody knows that the Saudi Government is the main supporter of terrorism, from Al-Qaida to Da'esh. Everybody knows that the noble Yemeni nation is suffering as a result of Saudi State terrorism.

The Saudi Minister for Foreign affairs is accusing my country of destabilizing the region, as if the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were supporting stability. Do the destruction of Yemen and the murder of innocent Yemeni children lead to the promotion of stability? Do the aerial bombardment of Saada in Yemen and the killing of dozens of children there, most of them under 15 years of age, support stability? I stress that

Saudi Arabia deliberately targeted those children and civilians.

Does the blockade against Qatar support stability? Does the financing of terrorist groups in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Libya strengthen stability? Does the creation of terrorist groups in Lebanon that launched a suicide attack against the embassy of Iran in Beirut support stability? Saudi Arabia claims that it is defending the Arab nation. Is the waging of proxy wars the way to defend the Arab nation? Does defending the Arab nation mean inciting Israel to attack Lebanon? Does defending the Arab nation mean abandoning the Palestinian people? Saudi Arabia is not defending the Arab nation; rather it is killing Arabs with their dollars. It has no pity for any Arab State and for any Arab people, even if they were its allies.

Saudi Arabia claims that the Ansar Allah movement in Yemen has targeted civilian populations in Saudi territory by launching 199 ballistic missiles manufactured in Iran. That is an empty accusation. First, how could the Islamic Republic of Iran transport missiles to Yemen through the existing tight blockade? Secondly, if those were ballistic missiles, as Saudi Arabia claims, how come there were no civilian casualties? Has Saudi Arabia seen what a ballistic missile is capable of doing in terms of destruction? Given the lack of damage, those claims are nothing but lies.

We say to our Yemeni brothers of all parties to the conflict that the Islamic Republic of Iran wants stability in Yemen. We support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths. We call upon all Yemenis to engage in an intra-Yemeni dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations. Mr. Griffiths recently stated that those who say Ansar Allah does not want to negotiate are not being truthful. He informed the United Nations Human Rights Council of recent violations of human rights in Yemen as a result of crimes committed by the so-called Saudi-Emirati coalition in Yemen. In addition, water distribution networks have been targeted, while prohibiting medications from entering Yemen. The report speaks of documented evidence that the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are responsible for human rights violations in Yemen.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the Saudi Minister boasts of Saudi wealth. He says that Saudi Arabia paid $13 billion to the Yemeni people. Indeed he can say that, but the money was paid to kill Yemenis, destroy Yemen and increase famine and cholera there. That money was not paid for medicines and the reconstruction of the country. I would like to say to the Saudi Minister for Foreign Affairs that Iran is an honest and loyal neighbour to every honest neighbour. We have called upon you to engage in a dialogue, and we call upon you once again to engage in a dialogue to resolve problems for the well-being of the Muslim nation and the stability and security of the peoples in the region. The doors of the Islamic Republic of Iran are open for you.

In response to the claims made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates a few days ago in this Hall (see A/73/PV.14) pertaining to the three Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf, namely, Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb, the Islamic Republic of Iran underscores that those islands are Iranian. The claims by the Emirates are baseless. We reject them and consider those claims to be interference in our affairs. The Islamic Republic of Iran expresses its readiness to hold bilateral negotiations with the United Arab Emirates in order to remove the existing misunderstanding.

**Ms. Simonyan** (Armenia): The delegation of Armenia requested the floor in exercise of the right of reply to respond to the statement made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan on Friday (see A/73/PV.13). We note that a substantial portion of the statement makes references to Armenia with regard to the Nagorno Karabakh issue, with lopsided interpretations of international law and selective references to the Charter of the United Nations.

Azerbaijan continues to refer to the right of return for refugees to their homes, which is consistent with their practice of turning a deaf ear to the fact that any arrangement for the return of refugees to the places of their former residence requires a comprehensive approach. The provision for the right of refugees along with other elements, most notably the full recognition of the realization of the right to self-determination, is among the basic principles for a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, which Azerbaijan has so far chosen to disregard.

Azerbaijan has been remarkably consistent in making selective references to the provisions of the four Security Council resolutions adopted in 1993 (resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993), and 884 (1993)). Those four resolutions call for the cessation

of hostilities, the opening of communications and the resumption of peace negotiations with all parties concerned, including the people of Nagorno Karabakh.

However, in response to each of those resolutions, Azerbaijan responded with an intensification of its military offenses. Explicit in its ambition to seek a military solution to the conflict, Azerbaijan has been incrementally raising tensions in the region, as demonstrated by a large-scale aggression against the people of Nagorno Karabakh in April 2016 in violation of the trilateral ceasefire agreement of 1994 and the trilateral agreement on the consolidation of the cease fire of 1995. The escalation by Azerbaijan in 2016 followed the logic of its long-standing policy of inciting hatred against Armenians at the highest level, which led to the extreme radicalization of society in Azerbaijan, including among the youth.

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict erupted as a result of the denial of one of the fundamental human rights, the right of people to self-determination. It is about the right of people to choose their own destiny and to decide the form of governance in their own homeland. The people of Nagorno Karabakh had to defend themselves from extermination, and they succeeded in doing so without any international intervention.

Armenia has declared unequivocally its adherence to the peace negotiations conducted under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-Chairs with a view to finding a lasting and comprehensive solution to the conflict. We hope that Azerbaijan will invest efforts in promoting a culture of peace, good-neighbourly relations, democracy and human rights. And it is in that context that Armenia urges Azerbaijan to take genuine steps toward ending its persistent warmongering, hate speech and intolerance and to commit in good faith to the implementation of the agreements reached in the course of the negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group co-Chairs.

**Mr. Tevi** (Vanuatu): I take the opportunity to exercise the right of reply to Indonesia's recent statement (see A/73/PV.11). Please allow me at the outset to express Vanuatu's deep sympathy and solidarity to the people and the Government of Indonesia during this difficult time as they are suffering from the effects of the recent earthquake and tsunami. We are confident that the spirit of perseverance of the people of Indonesia affected by that terrible tragedy, together with the solidarity of the international community, will assist in overcoming the suffering caused by the devastating forces of nature.

Regarding West Papua, Vanuatu agrees with Indonesia that allegations of flagrant, systematic and widespread human rights violations and of the neglect of civil, social, political, economic and cultural rights cannot be taken lightly. When Papua and civil-society organizations and international human rights organizations such as an Amnesty International report with great diligence to the United Nations cases of gross human rights violations, it is crucial that those allegations be examined and investigated thoroughly by the relevant human rights mechanisms.

That is the basic reason why Vanuatu welcomed the news of the visit to Papua last year of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The Special Rapporteur was able to see with his own eyes that Papua was lagging behind other parts of Indonesia in many aspects. However, the former High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, said in his last statement as High Commissioner for Human Rights that he was concerned that, despite the positive engagement of the authorities in many respects, the Government of Indonesia's invitation for the High Commissioner to visit Papua has yet to be honoured. Vanuatu would encourage Indonesia to renew its invitation to the new High Commissioner for Human Rights and to organize a visit by her to Papua in the near future. That would be important in order to obtain an objective assessment of human rights issues in West Papua.

Members will agree that Vanuatu is not alone in raising concerns about human rights at the United Nations and that there are other Members raising similar concerns. Historically, Vanuatu's stance on human rights abuses, decolonization and the wrongs of apartheid has always been strong, and for that reason Vanuatu will continue to act on that basis.

**Mrs. Alhefeiti** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation wishes to exercise the right of reply to address the allegations made by the representative of Iran in his statement.

The United Arab Emirates reaffirms that the three islands in the Arabian Gulf, namely, Lesser Tunb, Greater Tunb and Abu Musa, form an integral part of the territories of the United Arab Emirates. The United Arab Emirates categorically rejects Iran's

ongoing occupation of those three Emirati islands, which contravenes international law. Iran's claims to those three islands are baseless. We continue to call on Iran to resolve that issue through direct negotiations, the International Court of Justice or international arbitration.

Iran's expansionist policies and its attempts to export its revolution to other countries are in gross violation of the principle of sovereignty. Its continuous interference in the domestic affairs of Arab States has caused an increase in tension in the region and constitutes a threat to the stability there. Any Iranian interference in the domestic affairs of Arab States is, therefore, unacceptable and needs to be addressed.

We stress that Iran is a country that harbours terrorism in the region, including Hizbullah in Lebanon and Syria, the Houthis in Yemen and terrorist groups and cells in the Kingdom of Bahrain, Iraq, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Kuwait. We firmly condemn the increasing influence of Iran in the Yemeni conflict. Iran has been helping the Houthis by providing them with financial, strategic and military support, and by providing their fighters with training and weapons in Yemen, which represents a blatant violation of Security Council resolutions 2216 (2015) and 2231 (2015).

Iran provides very advanced weapons to the Houthis along with developed technology that no other non-governmental party has received, including ballistic missiles and hundreds of thousands of landmines and improvised explosive devices, which kill civilians across Yemen. Reports from United Nations agencies have cited information according to which Iran provides the Houthis with weapons and equipment. The unconditional support from Iran to the Houthis, including ballistic missiles and other kinds of weapons, remains a direct threat to the legitimate Government of Yemen and the Yemeni people. That support also constitutes a threat to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to navigation in the Red Sea and to all the countries of the region.

In that regard, we recall that the coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen was formed in 2015 at the request of the legitimate Government in Yemen to protect Yemen and its people from the continuous Houthi aggression supported by Iran. That request is entirely consistent with international law. Furthermore, we informed the Security Council of that coalition, as appropriate. The United Arab Emirates is committed to international humanitarian law. We emphasize our humanitarian commitment to support the people of Yemen. It is incumbent upon the international community to put pressure on the Houthis by taking immediate action to prevent Iran from providing the Houthis with arms, funds and technical support in direct violation of Security Council resolutions 2216 (2015) and 2231 (2015). It remains our firm belief that the only solution to the crisis in Yemen is through a political settlement.

**Mr. Musayev** (Azerbaijan): Addressing directly the delegation of Armenia, I want to recommend that when the representative of that country has nothing to say, he should not say anything, instead of making himself a laughingstock. The comments just made by the representative of Armenia, which are false and unprofessional in substance and inappropriate in tone, do not deserve any response. However, given the importance of addressing the root causes of the conflict and their implications for regional peace and security and the conflict settlement process, we deem it important to focus briefly on the following key points.

First, the Nagorno Karabakh region has always been and will remain an integral part of Azerbaijan.

Second, it was Armenia that resorted to force, violence and terrorist activities in an attempt to realize its groundless and unlawful territorial claims.

Third, since the very first day of the conflict, combat operations have been conducted exclusively inside the territory of Azerbaijan — almost in the very centre of the country — affecting its civilian population and infrastructure.

Fourth, it is Armenia that continues to occupy the Nagorno Karabakh region and the surrounding seven districts of Azerbaijan, in gross violation of international law and Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993).

Fifth, Armenia and its affiliates in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan are responsible for internationally wrongful acts, several of which constitute serious breaches of obligations under the peremptory norms of general international law — *jus cogens*.

Sixth, Armenia's policy and practices are based on exclusion and discrimination on ethnic grounds and are aimed at the legitimation of the results of the unlawful use of force and ethnic cleansing.

Seventh, Armenia distorts and misinterprets the principle of a people's right to self-determination and, notwithstanding the concept of self-determination under international law, attempts to impose the view that that principle may be applied in the form of unilateral secession for the Armenian minority group living in the Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. In reality, such a view has nothing in common with the principle of self-determination set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe of 1975 and other international documents. Actions that Armenian describes as the exercise of the right to self-determination have been unequivocally qualified by the Security Council and other authoritative international organizations as the unlawful use of force and the commission of other serious crimes.

The international community, including the Security Council and the General Assembly, has consistently reaffirmed the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of Azerbaijan. The illegality of the subordinate, racist minority regime established by Armenia in the occupied territory of Azerbaijan has been repeatedly confirmed at the international level in the most unambiguous terms. Eighth, Armenia has consistently obstructed the conflict-settlement process and refuses, in the meantime, to start results-oriented negotiations, while it regularly resorts to various provocations to escalate the situation on the ground.

Finally, the achievement of peace, security and stability will be possible, first and foremost, only if the consequences of Armenia's occupation are removed, thereby ensuring that its armed forces are immediately, unconditionally and completely withdrawn from the territories of Azerbaijan; that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country are restored; and that the right of internally displaced Azerbaijanis to return to their homes is guaranteed and implemented.

That is what international law and the Security Council demand and that can, in no way, be replaced by half-measures made under some pretext, introduced as a compromise or used as a bargaining chip in the conflict-settlement process.

**Mr. Taborat** (Indonesia): The Indonesian delegation is compelled to take the floor to exercise its right of reply to the statement that was just made by the delegation of Vanuatu. Although that statement was disguised with a flowery human rights concern, Vanuatu's sole intention and action is to challenge directly the internationally agreed principles of friendly relations between States, sovereignty and territorial integrity. In many instances, Vanuatu has shown that it is supporting a separatist movement. I wonder whether that is the way a country that abides by international law should behave. Such inexcusable support for separatist individuals is clearly shown through Vanuatu's inclusion in its delegation to the United Nations of a number of persons with serious criminal records and separatist agendas.

When a faraway country that is clueless as to what is happening in the provinces of a sovereign and independent country tries to give a false dream and support to a group of individuals with separatist intentions, it goes against all honour and common decency. And it is ill-intentioned, which is contrary to the principles of friendly relations among States. Indonesia categorically rejects any efforts to violate the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, which all Members of the United Nations hold dear. The people of Papua have once and for all reaffirmed that Papua has been an irrevocable part of Indonesia since 1945. It was confirmed by the United Nations and the international community almost 50 years ago. It is an indisputable fact that the status of the provinces of Papua and West Papua is final, irreversible and permanent. If the delegation of Vanuatu wishes to keep bringing up the issue, I suggest that it study international law first.

The repeated accusations of human rights abuses sound like a broken record. We have a saying in our part of the world that people should look in the mirror before saying bad things to others. If Vanuatu is concerned about human rights, why do they not start at home? And if their concern means supporting separatism, then they have crossed a red line and they are violating the Charter of the United Nations. In closing, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity is the cardinal rule in relations among nations and in the United Nations. Indonesia has honour and pride and does not like to interfere in the domestic problems of others, unlike Vanuatu.

**Ms. Danish** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I associate myself with the statement made by the delegation of the United Arab Emirates in its exercise of the right to reply. I would like to add that my country is accustomed to hearing such false allegations and accusations from a regime that puts the blame on other

States to cover up its own failures in fulfilling the ambitions and aspirations of its people.

Iran continues to wreak havoc and destruction, while sponsoring sectarianism and extremism. The Houthi-Iranian militias supported by Iran continue to launch Iranian-made and Iranian-provided ballistic missiles on Saudi towns. That is an undeniable fact. There have been 199 of those missiles launched in addition to Iran's destabilizing actions, which constitute a threat to the security, safety and navigation in the Bab Al-Mandab strait and the Red Sea region. I reaffirm that my country remains resolutely committed to achieving a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Yemen, based on the three terms of reference, namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative, the outcome of Yemen's National Dialogue Conference and Security Council resolution 2216 (2015).

Iran's violations have put it under international sanctions. My country calls on the Iranian regime to adopt a new approach and to act as a State responsible for the welfare and stability of its people, instead of wasting the people's resources on supporting terrorist groups, sectarianism and extremism. Iran should act in accordance with the principle of good-neighbourliness

**Mr. Mounzer** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize for taking the floor during the final minutes of the meeting, but I must reply to what was said earlier by the representative of Canada in order to refute his false allegations. We stress that those allegations are baseless and that they were made in the framework of Canada's engagement with terrorist groups in Syria, in particular the White Helmets organization, which is affiliated with the terrorist Al-Nusra Front, which is listed on the United Nations lists of terrorist entities. Promoting the White Helmets organization means promoting terrorism and Al-Qaida, which has perpetrated many terrorist acts in the United States, Europe and other regions around the world.

**Mr. Golroo** (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation is compelled to take the floor for the second time in exercise of the right of reply to the statements just made by the representatives of the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

Despite what some people seem to believe, the repetition of groundless accusations and fabrications does not lend them credibility. Reiterating those kinds of absurd and extravagant claims is reminiscent of Paul Joseph Goebbels, the Reich Minister of Propaganda of Nazi Germany. He also had a simplistic approach to the inversion of a lie into a truth. He said that a lie told once remains a lie, but a lie told a thousand times becomes the truth. Goebbels' approach worked at the time.

However, Emirati and Saudi officials are negligent of the fact that repeating falsehoods year after year does not and cannot conceal or alter the truth in our age of digital communication. My delegation, in its first right of reply, carefully considered its observations in order to preserve good neighbourly relations; therefore, we touched only the tip of the iceberg. Moreover, the time limit for the right of reply does not make it possible for me to present the factual and background details of what has been pointed out by my delegation.

There is a lot to be said about leaked and unclassified information concerning the Bush Administration's omission of 28 pages of the *9/11 Commission Report*, illustrating the fact that the United States Government was covering up evidence that Saudi officials were complicit in the attacks, as well as tons of credible information about Saudi Arabia as a main source of funds and support for terrorist movements and the fact that that country remains the most prolific sponsor of international extremism and terrorism, supporting groups such as the Taliban in Afghanistan, Al-Qaida, Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Al-Nusra Front.

There is also a lot to be said about the complicity of the United Arab Emirates regime in the aggression against the Yemeni people and the slaughter of innocent people, which has resulted in a human catastrophe in today's world. The frequent and indiscriminate air strikes on cities by Saudi and United Arab Emirates aircraft is an appalling crime, producing no result other than the killing and injuring of thousands of innocent women and children and the displacement of millions of civilians.

In a futile effort to divert regional and global attention from the criminal Saudi-led aggression against the impoverished and defenceless nation of Yemen, the United Arab Emirates delegation has yet again repeated its baseless claims to the three Iranian islands that are outside of its territorial waters and historically of Iranian identity. The Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa islands belong to Iran, and we strongly condemn such outdated and ineffective claims, which are an instance of interference in Iran's internal affairs. It is a pity that some Persian Gulf States ignore historical and geographical realities and disregard the

authority of their neighbours. Regrettably, they do not follow rational policies based on good neighbourliness.

Despite those claims and allegations, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always taken steps to ensure the stability and security of countries in the region and to fight terrorism and terrorist groups, and we believe that the only way to restore security and tranquillity in West Asia is to hold a dialogue among the countries of the region. Tehran's principal policy has always been based on maintaining greater convergence and mutual respect for the sovereignty of other countries, especially with neighbours and in the observance of good-neighbourliness.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 8?

*It was so decided.*

**Statement by the President**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): We have reached the end of the general debate. Allow me to begin by expressing my condolences to and solidarity with the Government and the people of Indonesia, who have been affected by terrible natural disasters. I am deeply moved by the plight of the victims and the magnitude of the destruction that has been suffered by that beloved country. I also express my solidarity with Barbados and Japan for the large-scale disasters that have similarly affected their peoples in recent days.

The general debate that we conclude today has been a further indication of the relevance of the General Assembly and the United Nations. It has been a week of meetings and dialogue — the week in which the name of this Organization is most frequently mentioned in the media and social networks around the world. This is the week in which the agenda of the United Nations occupies prime position in presidential offices. This week will undoubtedly set the tone for our agenda and work throughout the year.

This has also been the week in which delegations and their teams endure the greatest pressure and, as was the case for me as President, a week of countless meetings and events that enabled us to advance the multilateral agenda and strengthen regional and bilateral relations. However, I think we can all say that we are concluding the general debate having achieved success and with the satisfaction of having fulfilled our duty. But this is only the beginning of the seventy-third session, and I truly hope that this week's enthusiasm and efficiency will be maintained throughout the year.

I would like to summarize the results of the general debate in the following seven points, and I will be brief. The first result is undoubtedly the global reflection that we have all witnessed on the role of the Organization and the importance of multilateralism as the only response to the problems facing humankind. There is almost unanimous agreement among the representatives of the more than 7.6 billion inhabitants of the planet on the irreplaceable role of the Organization. We heard calls over and over again to strengthen multilateralism, which filled us with satisfaction, while at the same time presenting us with a great challenge to make the Organization more relevant every day for our peoples. To recall the words of the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines,

> "after seven decades, the United Nations remains the only institution with the capacity and authority to enable global cooperation for our collective ennoblement" (*A/73/PV.10, p.56*).

The second strategic result is that we have made the Organization a home for all of the nations of the world throughout the week. That required a great effort in terms of coordination and logistics on the part of the Secretariat and its staff, whom I warmly congratulate, but above all the week has provided a space for the deepening of bilateral ties and the strengthening of political and regional groups. The Assembly has been the scene of hundreds of meetings of our Heads of State and Government and Ministers of various offices, all contributing at this general debate to the strengthening of relations between our nations.

Third, we have shared visions and experiences on issues of common interest in more than 400 side events that took place during the week. For any ordinary person, it might be difficult to conceive the sheer number of events being held simultaneously. However, in one way or another, we were all involved in exchanging experiences, sharing progress and establishing commitments on issues of global interest.

Fourth, during the debate we reached agreement on two political declarations that reflect the commitment of our States at the highest level to eradicating tuberculosis and combating non-communicable diseases.

Fifth, seven countries signed and four countries ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons this week, strengthening our commitment to a world free from nuclear threat, to which we all aspire. With those latest signatories, 69 countries have signed and 19 have ratified that important instrument.

Sixth, our Heads of State and Government not only carried out an evaluation of the most sensitive issues of the international situation, but also shared the most significant advances in their strategies for sustainable development, peacebuilding and respect for human rights. In sum, this general debate has been the forum for presenting to the world the most important national and regional achievements and challenges.

Seventh, but no less important, this week was, as is the case every year, an encounter not just among Government leaders, but also among hundreds of activists, young people and leaders of social organizations who move the United Nations agenda forward and play a key role in the implementation of the commitments we make in the General Assembly.

If we added together all the speeches delivered in this Hall, we would have a global X-ray of the status of the world today, of the most important achievements of and challenges facing our nations, and of the role that this Organization and multilateralism play in the world. For that reason, we thank all Governments, without exception, for their commitment, to the Organization, which is reflected in their presence at this general debate. I thank the 121 Heads of State and Government, the nine Vice-Presidents and Deputy Prime Ministers, and the Ministers and Permanent Representatives who participated in this year's discussions.

The messages we heard from all of them were as diverse as the peoples of the world, but, at the same time, they abounded in similarities and shared concerns. I am pleased that delegations took the topic of this session and the seven working priorities that I proposed as the basis for their statements. As the Prime Minister of Nepal mentioned, in referring to the theme of this session,

> "The endeavour to make the United Nations relevant to all people is well captured in the philosophy of leaving no one behind" (*A/73/PV.11, p.21*).

Allow me to highlight several of the themes that were repeatedly addressed in this general debate.

First of all, I am deeply heartened by the fact that many countries have defended multilateralism and the need for joint actions to address the global challenges. I fully agree with the statement made by the Prime Minister of Belgium: "Multilateralism is not a hollow and meaningless concept. On the contrary, it is a conviction, because dialogue is tireless". (*A/73/PV.10, p.33*)

From international conflicts to terrorism and nuclear proliferation, from climate change and natural disasters to growing inequality and poverty, from migration and refugees to health and education, from the impact of new technologies to the world of work, we understand that we are faced with common challenges that require common answers. The President of Paraguay captured that idea very accurately by stating that,

> "In the face of an international scenario characterized by political uncertainty and economic volatility, we need collective and comprehensive strategies with a sense of shared responsibility." (*A/73/PV.7, p.13*)

Sustainable development and the threat of climate change were the issues most frequently mentioned by leaders during the debate. With good reason, countries are concerned about the storms, hurricanes and droughts that have been hitting them with increasing force. That terrible and devastating reality struck the regions of Asia-Pacific, the Caribbean and North America. The people in those regions are concerned about the loss of crops and desertification; they are concerned about running out of water in their main cities; they are concerned about the temperatures that make entire regions simply uninhabitable.

This Hall heard several voices crying out for swift and effective action for the financing and implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The President of France said: "We are told that it is already too late... So let us speed up". (*A/73/PV.6, p.31*)

Many countries also took advantage of this general debate to share their progress in the implementation of the Paris Agreement and underscored successful examples of renewable energy and technology reconversion.

The great majority of leaders referred to the actions being taken by their countries for the implementation the Sustainable Development Goals, their policies to assist the most vulnerable and measures to eradicate poverty and advance inclusive and sustained economic growth.

World leaders also referred to this year's celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, thereby emphasizing the full validity of human rights and the global clamour to ensure their full implementation.

Many rightly called for the achievement of full gender equality, once and for all, as a necessary condition for sustainable development and peace. I was also encouraged that a clear majority of Member States expressed their support for the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. The large displacements of people — both migrants and refugees — pose significant challenges and require clear policies and coordinated international action.

Let us recall that this week, before beginning the general debate, we gathered together to honour the great Nelson Mandela, his legacy and his memory, to remember, through the declaration that we adopted (resolution 73/1), that one of our most important purposes must be to work for peacebuilding and peacekeeping.

The emphasis placed by world leaders on the need to invest more in conflict prevention and in mediation is a reflection of a paradigm shift that we need to make in order to achieve sustainable peace. As the President of Liberia reminded us, on the occasion of the successful completion of the peacekeeping mission in that country, we "must never take peace for granted or forget the long shadow that years of conflict still cast over people's lives" (*A/73/PV.8, p.37*).

This general debate was also marked by positive developments, such as the peace agreements signed between Eritrea, Ethiopia and Djibouti, and the promising efforts towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The President of Kenya, for example, when referring to the current problems that the world faces, said that,

> "Today's problems, risks and threats are complex and call for more — not less — cooperation, more — not less — observance of the rule of law, more — not less — negotiation. We need a rules-based multilateral system."(*A/73/PV.9, p.16*)

I thank the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General for their unwavering commitment and their tireless work over these days. Their leadership is central to making the Organization increasingly relevant to our peoples. I would like to thank representatives for their work and effort in this general debate and their support for my presidency. I would also like to thank the officials of the Secretariat and the technical staff, who have enabled us to conclude this general debate successfully. I thank in particular all the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, who shared with me the task of steering the work of the General Assembly.

We are faced with the challenge of transforming all of the ideas, the commitments made and the challenges raised this week into concrete action, characterized by greater effectiveness and by a greater impact on people's lives, especially on the lives of those who need this Organization the most. We must make a difference, and the time to do so is now.

*The meeting rose at 1.50 p.m.*